



CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON
ASIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Chinese Women in Leadership

Edited by
Jie Ke
Gary N. McLean

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON
ASIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



palgrave
macmillan

Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership

Series Editors

Yonjoo Cho, University of Texas, Tyler, Tyler, TX, USA

Rajashi Ghosh, POLS, University of Drexel, Philadelphia, PA, USA

Judy Y. Sun, The University of Texas-Tyler, Tyler, TX, USA

Gary N. McLean, National Institute for Development Administration,
Bangkok, Thailand

Headed by leading Human Resource scholars, this new series taps into some of the hottest topics in business — gender, leadership and globalization — to explore the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Asian women in their quest to achieve success in regions which are traditionally resistant to women's career advancement.

Jie Ke · Gary N. McLean
Editors

Chinese Women in Leadership

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Jie Ke
Jackson State University
Jackson, MS, USA

Gary N. McLean
National Institute for Development
Administration
Bangkok, Thailand

Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership

ISBN 978-3-319-68818-3 ISBN 978-3-319-68819-0 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68819-0>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover image: K-King Photography Media Co. Ltd/DigitalVision/Getty Images
Cover design by Tom Howey

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

PREFACE

Leadership development theories started in the West but do not have to end in the West. We are truly grateful to our publisher, *Palgrave Macmillan*, for taking interest in women's leadership development in Asia and entrusting us to work on women leaders in China as the beginning of developing international leadership theories and future research plans.

The population of China is expected to reach 1.4 billion by the end of 2022, and women account for roughly half. However, in the 3,500 years of witnessed history of China, the official promotion of gender equity has been short. The national policies on developing women and granting women equal rights and opportunities with men did not emerge until after the founding of New China in 1949.

Over the past 70 years, although much progress has been made in developing women's leadership in China, there are still very few women leaders in different sectors, especially in the political sector. Mainland China has never had a women president, nor have any women served on the Standing Committee, where major decisions of running the country are made, and only one woman has served for a four-year term as the head of state during the past 50 years (WEF, 2021). As the second-largest global economy, China has a much larger gender gap to fill than any other country of similar economic power: the gender inequality index of China in 2021 was 0.68, ranking 107th of 144 countries (WEF, 2021); despite a high women's labor participation rate of 63.9%, only 17.5% of the key management positions were occupied by women (UNDP, 2020; WBDB,

2015). The status of gender inequality and the lack of women leaders at the top echelons of power in China invited us to take a deeper look into its contributing contextual factors in society, economy, culture, and politics. Fortunately, we are not alone in this journey. We are joined by sixteen competent scholars and colleagues who share the same dream with us: helping China move toward women's equality and leadership.

Jackson, USA
Bangkok, Thailand

Jie Ke
Gary N. McLean

REFERENCES

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). *Gender Inequality Index*. Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>
- World Bank Doing Business (WBDB). (2015). *Enterprise Surveys: What businesses experience*. <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/2012/china>
- World Economic Forum (WEF). (2021). The global gender gap report 2021. *World Economic Forum*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This is the fifth in a 7-book series on Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership. Based on current literature, empirical studies, and personal reflections, the authors covered critical components of the current environment for women's leadership development in China; showcase women leaders in the education, business, government and NOG sectors; and make comparisons in Asian and non-Asian contexts.

PRAISE FOR *CHINESE WOMEN* IN *LEADERSHIP*

“In Chinese culture, women are often compared to *flowers and water*. Flowers are beautiful, but fragile. Water nourishes all lives but is considered weak and soft. These metaphors, while expressing appreciation for women, also indicate that Chinese traditional social structure and culture do not give women an equal and prominent position, and women’s leadership often needs to be achieved in a subtle and feminine way. Modernization and globalization have brought a great impact to Chinese culture and society. Women’s roles in the family, organization, and society have also undergone tremendous changes. Chinese women’s leadership is rising. However, the influence of traditional culture is still strong. To understand women’s leadership in today’s China, we still need to pay attention to the impact of its dependency context. Just as we want to understand flowers, we need to investigate the garden first; to see the water clearly, we need to study the river. To get a deep understanding of Chinese Women in leadership, we need to understand Chinese women in their unique environment. The book, *Chinese Women in Leadership*, is like an elaborate museum showing the development of Chinese women’s leadership in various contexts and sectors. Through diverse perspectives and international comparisons, the authors reveal rich contents and the current dynamics of Chinese women’s leadership. We can see not only flowers and water, but also gardens and rivers. Even better, this book lets us see the graceful *butterflies emerging*: Based on a profound humanistic spirit, the authors provide a beautiful outlook and valuable

suggestions for the future development of Chinese women's leadership with compassionate understanding and kind wishes."

—Siqing Pengi, *Professor, Guanghua School of Management, Peking University; Vice president of Chinese Society of Social Psychology*

"This is a delightful scholarly book that informs and inspires. The book debunks the general impression that China has achieved gender equality since Mao Zedong pridefully declared that "women hold up half the sky." The 12 chapters in this easy-to-read book show that women leaders in China do not yet have the same opportunities to be recognized and respected in the same degree as men. Their leadership has been hampered on many levels. The book provides both historic and contemporary data along with qualitative evidence on the experiences of woman leaders in different sectors. It is a must-read for both scholars and practitioners interested in gender equality in leadership opportunities and development in China. This book offers ideas for scholars to study further the challenges of woman's leadership in China and to identify systems that will unlock Chinese women's potential to become powerful decision-makers and influencers. This book inspires both men and women to embrace the opportunities to lead together in creating a world when gender inequality is a thing of the past."

—Anne S. Tsui, *Motorola Professor of International Management Emerita at the Arizona State University, United States*

"*Chinese Women in Leadership* is a must-read for anyone curious about women's leadership and the social, cultural, and political forces challenging and shaping the journeys of Chinese women leaders. Professors Jie Ke and Gary McLean have assembled a stellar collection of human resource development scholarship and practical strategies to help us understand the intersectional forces faced by Chinese women as they bump up against family structures, educational pressures, politics, and more in their quest to lead and change Chinese and global society."

—Laura L. Bierema, *Professor, University of Georgia and Immediate Past President, Academy of Human Resource Development, United States*

CONTENTS

1	Overview: Why Are We Focusing on Developing Women Leaders in China?	1
	Jie Ke and Judy Yi Sun	
2	Family Role and Social Status	17
	Judy Yi Sun and Jane Yuting Zhuang	
3	Cultural Constraints and Opportunities	35
	Jackie Jinfang Liu	
4	Policies and Legislation	71
	Jia Wang	
5	Educational Opportunities	111
	Xiaoping Tong and Anne Namatsi Lutomia	
6	Women Leaders in the Education Sector	139
	Ying Feng and Bo Fang	
7	Women Entrepreneurs in the Business Sector	165
	Kai-wen Hsieh and Lianjuan Wang	
8	Women's Participation in the Government Sector	177
	Taylor Jing Tian and Jessica Li	

9	Women Leaders in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Sector	203
	Yuanlu Niu and Cynthia Sims	
10	China in an Asian Context	227
	Xue Yang Coleman and Jessica Li	
11	China in a Non-Asian Context	247
	Jie Ke and Millard J. Bingham	
12	Butterflies Emerging: Women's Leadership in China	285
	Gary N. McLean	
	Index	299

EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

About the Editors

Jie Ke, B.A. Hon, M.B.A., Ph.D. I am an associate professor of HRD at Jackson State University and serve as a board member as well as a co-chair for the International Committee and China Special Interest Group (SIG) with the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD). I also have been serving as a track chair/co-chair of different tracks (Organizational Development and Assessment and Evaluation) of AHRD annual international research conferences since 2016.

Born and raised in China, I should be able to represent a typical Chinese woman of my generation, but I am often told that I am not like a Chinese woman. I often wonder why and what in me makes me different—appearance or temperament or something else. I think that whatever in me that contributes to my “difference” has everything to do with my family background as well as my life and work experience. In Chapter One, I further reflect on the impact of my parents and family. Therefore, I will not repeat it here.

Instead, I would like to talk about my education and working experiences that have transformed me. I studied English literature, a very popular major for girls then, at a top state university in central China. Going to college in China was extremely competitive in the 1990s. I cherished the opportunity and devoted most of my college time to studying, hoping to get a well-paying job after graduation. We had 80 students in

the cohort, of which only one-quarter were men. By the time of graduation, I was among the top ten of the cohort, but that did not make my job search easier. Without a good network, my best option was to be a junior employee at a foreign trade company, and I did not even get an offer from any good ones! So, I started to explore other options out of the state and went to another city in the home state of my parents where my aunt's family was. With the help of my aunt and her daughter, I went to a city-sponsored job fair where an international department of a state-owned bank was recruiting college graduates. I handed them my resume and got an interview with the head of the department. The interview went well and I could tell they liked me, but I was told that they might not be able to give me an offer because they were only allowed to recruit men college graduates. Yes, all seven lines that they had were all for men, not women! Luckily, the department head overrode the rule and decided to offer me a job by the end of the day. I became the only woman hired in the department for that year. For a long time, a rumor went around the bank, saying that I was only hired because I was a close relative of a key/responsible person in the HR unit of the department.

Regardless, I got a job that paid really well: my monthly salary with bonus in the International Business Department of the bank was 30 times that of my college peers (incredible, right?), not to say that I was given a free dorm and subsidized meals. Again, I cherished this great opportunity and decided to do a great job with my knowledge and abilities. But I also realized that I had a lot to learn because I knew nothing about banking and finance then. To catch up, I spent at least two evenings per week taking accounting and finance classes in evening schools and registered for the Financial English Certificate program organized by Hong Kong Standard Charter Bank. I soon found out that book knowledge was not enough to develop a career in the bank. I needed more practice and hands-on experience in units where I could interact with customers and process international banking business documents. In the assigned unit, I dealt with only English translations and administrative tasks, from which I saw the end of my career without further development. I applied for a change of unit many times and many years but never got approved because I was seen as fit and irreplaceable in the unit where I was assigned initially. In the meantime, all the other six men college hires the same year as I got multiple job rotations and different professional development trainings. After seven years, all of the six men colleagues got promotions, but I did not. The fact that I was the first in the city of 8 million people

to pass the Financial English Certificate program and was the only one who was awarded the Belgian Management Prize of the year in mainland China did not help me advance my career as I had expected.

That working experience in general, however, was a positive one. In my position, I was able to interact with high-level officials inside and outside of the bank, and the business trips to banks in the USA and Australia opened my eyes. I saw alternatives. At the end of the seventh year in the bank, I decided to quit my job and pursue graduate studies overseas. I thought I was not promoted because I was not good enough at finance and banking. So, I took an MBA with a concentration in finance at EDHEC in France, and then I transferred to the business school at Texas A&M University as an exchange student. By the time I graduated with my MBA, companies in the US had a hiring freeze due to the recession. So, I continued with my doctoral study, not in management or business, but in education because I felt more and more connected with teaching and learning, which was one of my passions when I was in elementary school. The original major of my doctoral program was higher education administration, but I happened to take many human resource development (HRD) courses in the same department. I fell in love with the field of HRD and switched majors.

In the doctoral study, I was exposed to many new concepts such as gender inequality, women's leadership, and leadership development. The learning made me reflect on the work experience, and understand gender bias, discrimination, and the glass ceiling of which women were not aware when it happened. One of my good friends in the doctoral program told me that I could become a really good leader if I wanted to. It had never occurred to me that could be true someday.

I often consider myself lucky in many ways. My parents gave me a good education with a safe and loving home and taught me to work hard and be independent, the values that helped me tremendously throughout my life and career. The education I got and earned further enlightened me to be the leader of myself, the leader of my classes, and the leader of my research. The freedom of being a leader is so powerful that I feel empowered to help other women become leaders as well through my scholarship.

At the end of this introduction, I would like to give a special thanks to an incredible Chinese woman leader, Dr. Judy Sun, an associate professor at the University of Texas, Tyler, and my co-author of Chapter One. Dr. Sun co-drafted the proposal and outline for this book, and inspired, and

mentored me with no reserve after she transferred the co-editorship to me. Dr. Sun also shared with me her passion for developing women leaders in China which I believe you will see from her reflections in Chapter One.

Gary N. McLean, B.A. Hon., M.A., M.Div., Ed.D., Ph.D.-honorary

As a man and as a non-Asian, I am often asked why I am involved in a book on women's leadership in Asia. Compared with women who have a history of interest in gender research and practice, I bring different, yet passionate, perspectives to this series and, specifically, to this book on China.

I spent the first 21 years of my life in Canada (with the exception of one year in the U.S. during college) as the older of two children, my sister is almost four years my junior. My father was initially a laborer in a warehouse but, over the years, was promoted to end his career as Canadian national director of warehousing. My mother was a nurse who worked outside of the home for as long as I can remember. My grandmother (on my father's side) became my primary caregiver. She was a strong, independent woman who did not work outside of the home. As my mother often worked the 3-11 p.m. shift, dad usually made dinner. Because both parents worked, my sister and I did much of the housework, including vacuuming, dusting, doing the dishes, yard work, shoveling snow, doing the laundry, and hanging clothes out to dry—even in the cold Canadian winters. As there were no boys in the neighborhood, but many girls my age, I grew up with girls as my best friends. We would play girls' games (dolls, house, skipping rope, tossing balls up against the side of the house to accompanying songs and actions), and, in turn, they would play boys' games (football, cars, and trucks).

My dad had graduated from high school in Commerce, which, at the time, included shorthand and typing. So, I watched him use these skills and was fascinated. I decided that I wanted to teach those subjects. When I went to university, I did a double major in secretarial studies and business administration. But no one had told me that secretarial work was for women, not men. So, the first secretarial class I took consisted of 35 women and me. Spending three years in this environment was a wonderful education in gender discrimination, and, thus, gender studies, as well as secretarial studies. There was one other student doing the same double major, and she had the same type of experience when she entered the business administration classes as the only woman.

I worked full time while attending university full time. I started as a secretary and bookkeeper, but I was quickly promoted over more experienced women to office managers. I soon figured out that this was not because of my qualifications, but, rather, it was because of my gender. I knew this was not right.

I taught in a community college for two years, and all of my students were women. I decided to return to do a doctorate in business teacher education, which led, again, when I took a job at the University of Minnesota, to having almost all women students. As I transitioned into human resource development (HRD), initially, most of my students were men. But, as the workplace changed, it was not long before I found myself, again, teaching classes consisting primarily of women. As I began to do my scholarly work, my first book was *Humanity as a Career: A Holistic Approach to Sex Equity* (McLean & Crawford, 1979), and I researched gender depictions in secretarial textbooks and sexual harassment (of both men and women). I have always believed that gender equity is good for both women and men!

My international interests began when I was eight. I was a wolf cub in the Boy Scouts program. To earn my hobby badge, I needed a hobby. My Cubmaster, a philatelist, offered me a stamp album full of stamps, and I began a lifelong love of philately. I was fascinated by the pictures, maps, and stories they told, and I traveled the world through these little pieces of paper. I vowed that I would one day visit all of the countries on my stamps (an impossible task, of course).

Further, my mother was very outgoing, and she would often bring international sojourners home with her from work to share a meal. She recognized that they were lonely, and I had wonderful conversations with them, fueling my international interests. I was active in international clubs throughout my higher education, serving as vice-president at Teachers College, Columbia University, during my master's degree (the president was from Taiwan/China), and serving as president during my doctoral work.

My first professional experience internationally occurred during the mid to late 1980s when I worked on a World Bank project in Bangladesh. Since then, I have worked in over 56 countries, focusing mainly in Asia. I have taught, consulted, and delivered keynotes in many parts of China. My interest in Asia was cemented when my wife, Lynn, and I added four Korean adoptees to our two biological children, to form a family of six kids, with only five years from oldest to youngest. Because of the

flexibility I had as a professor at the University of Minnesota, my wife and I consciously committed to sharing housework and childcare, while she worked as an entrepreneur, pastor, and executive director for two community-based organizations.

My career journey has taken me from the community college (Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, Massachusetts); the Office of Research and Evaluation at the City University of New York; acting department chair at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York; Professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; Texas A&M University, College Station; International Islamic University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur; and Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand. I have been a visiting professor across the globe, with the longest stretch at the National Institute for Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand, where I currently teach in the doctoral program in HROD.

I have served in many professional organizations as President (Academy of HRD, International Management Development Association, Minnesota Business Education Inc.) and many other roles. I served as a consultant for 50 years in organization development. I served as editor for five peer-reviewed journals. And I have published over 500 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. I wrote a book on organization development and co-edited a book on HRD in Vietnam that has received the AHRD book of the year award. I have been inducted into AHRD's Hall of Fame and the Hall of Fame for Adult and Continuing Education.

Lynn died of oral cancer in 2018, after a nine-year fight against the disease. In October of 2021, I married Merrilee Fryer, a retired lawyer whose law firm focused on family law, often dealing with domestic violence. When she retired from her law firm, she spent much of her time working with developmentally delayed adults. We share our values in how we have chosen to commit our time.

I love doing research, writing, and editing, relying heavily on my English minor from my undergraduate work. My passions for gender equity and Asia have combined to provide me with this opportunity to work with so many scholars from across Asia, especially, those committed to women's leadership in China.

Contributors

Bingham Millard J. associate professor of interdisciplinary studies and formerly served as interim dean and associate dean of the College of Education and Human Development at Jackson State University (JSU). He has also held leadership and administrative positions with the Mississippi State Personnel Board, and the Mississippi Department of Education.

Coleman Xue Yang is an instructional designer at the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is finishing her Ph.D. in Human Resource Development at the U of I. Her research interests include empowering learners and developing the current and future workforce.

Fang Bo is a Ph.D. student in Human Resource Development at the University of Minnesota. Bo's research interests include national and international HRD, employee and leadership development, and mixed-method research. Before joining academia, he was a training specialist in PingAn life insurance where he worked on sales training and development.

Feng Ying is a Ph.D. candidate majoring in Human Resource Development. Ying's research interests include technology application in human resource development, women's leadership development, and the research-practice gap. Beyond academia, she has experience in recreation club management and sports coaching. In her spare time, Ying enjoys playing badminton, cooking, and traveling.

Hsieh Kai-wen is an associate professor of Management at Sanjo city university of Japan. Her research interests cover many fields, including startups in the earlier, Entrepreneurship, and Business succession.

Ke Jie obtained her Ph.D. in Human Resource Development (HRD) from Texas A&M University and MBA from EDHEC in France. She is an associate professor of HRD at Jackson State University. She serves in the Board of Directors and as Co-chair of China SIG and International Committee of AHRD.

Li Jessica professor of HRD, is Associate Dean for Research and Director of the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign. Her research covers learning, leadership, and technology augmented learning with over 100 publications, including journal articles, book chapters, editorials, a book, and three special issues.

Liu Jackie Jinfang is a Ph.D. candidate in Human Resource Development at the University of Minnesota. Before she came to the U.S., she was the Chinese language and culture trainer at the British Embassy, Culture and Education section, Beijing China. Her research focuses on women's leadership and culture.

Lutomia Anne Namatsi is an interdisciplinary postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Agricultural Sciences Education and Communication, and Department of Entomology at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Her research interests span international collaboration, adult learning, mobile learning, leadership, and organizational development. She has published journal articles and book chapters.

McLean Gary N. is professor emeritus, HRD, University of Minnesota; has taught in two Thai universities; has been visiting professor at three Chinese universities; is past editor of several refereed journals; served as President, AHRD and IMDA; has a lifelong interest in gender, organization development, and international HRD research.

Niu Yuanlu, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor of Human Resource and Workforce Development at the University of Arkansas in the United States. Her research focuses on lookism in the workplace, career development, human resource development, women's studies, and workforce diversity.

Sims Cynthia, Ph.D. is President of S.I.M.S LLC (Sims Intercultural Management Solutions) in Chicago, Illinois. She also serves as an Instructor where she has a joint appointment in the Departments of Literacy, Leadership, & Development and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago.

Sun Judy Yi is an associate professor of HRD in Soules College of Business at the University of Texas at Tyler. Her research interests cover career development, management development, Entrepreneurship, and Women in Leadership. She received her Ph.D. in Human Resource Development from the University of Texas at Tyler.

Tian Taylor Jing is Associate Director for Asia Initiatives, the Office of International Studies and Programs at Illinois State University. She

received her Ph.D. in Human Resource Development at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include women's leadership and development in Asia and International settings.

Tong Xiaoping is an assistant professor in corporate management at Beihang University, China. She holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include Chinese Human Resource Development and agile organization. She has published an article in the *Journal of Workplace Learning*.

Wang Jia is Professor of Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University, USA. Focusing on national and cross-cultural HRD, workplace learning, crisis management, workplace incivility, and career/family issues, she has published her research work in international journals and conferences. She is the past Editor-in-Chief of *Human Resource Development Review*.

Wang Lianjuan is Associate professor of Management at Beijing University of Post and Telecommunications in China. Her research interests include Family business, Digital entrepreneurship, and Knowledge management.

Zhuang Jane Yuting is a tenure track faculty at Shanghai Lixin University of Accounting and Finance. Her research interests include industrial clustering, cultural heritage, women entrepreneurship, and research methodology.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1	Chinese women’s leadership development conceptual framework and chapter outline	10
Fig. 7.1	China Real GDP Growth 1980–2018 (<i>Data Source</i> IMF “World Economic Outlook Database” [2019])	168
Fig. 10.1	China in comparison with Japan and South Korea using the Culture Compass tool (Data retrieved from https://geert-hofstede.com/china.html . Copyright 2016 by ITIM International. Reprinted with permission)	232

LIST OF TABLES

Table 7.1	Percentage of female students enrolled (%)	170
Table 11.1	2021 Global Gender Gap	269
Table 11.2	Gender Gap Index 2021 versus Gender Inequality Index 2020	271
Table 11.3	Percentage of womenleaders	272



Overview: Why Are We Focusing on Developing Women Leaders in China?

Jie Ke and Judy Yi Sun

WHY ARE WE FOCUSING ON DEVELOPING WOMEN LEADERS IN CHINA?

Women in leadership in China had not been a frequently visited topic until the 1990s. Despite increasing participation in the nation's economic development, the representation of women in society at decision-making levels has been consistently low and did not really catch people's attention (Zhu et al., 2022). Since China affirmed the gender equality principle and admitted that the gender gap remained a significant problem that needed to be addressed to improve the situation in 1995 (Attane, 2013),

J. Ke (✉)
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA
e-mail: jie.ke@jsums.edu

J. Y. Sun
University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, USA
e-mail: jsun@uttyler.edu

more and more research on women's leadership, identity change, leadership traits, and the change social status emerged in the past three decades (Li et al., 2020; Sun & Li, 2017).

Reflecting on the increasing demand for research in this area in China, the China special interest group (SIG) of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) is sponsoring this book on *Chinese Women in Leadership* as part of the series on *Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership*.

While China has been one of the most influential countries in the globalization process and has been increasingly studied from an HRD perspective, the role of women leaders in Chinese society has not been examined much in past decades. Compared with its counterparts in Asia, gender discrimination in China is often not considered as such, but rather as a true difference based on a belief in the men's basic superiority (Schein, 2001). The overall participation of women in the current political body and high-level government entities remains a disappointment to many Chinese feminists (Sun & Li, 2017). Less than one-quarter (24.9%) of all positions in China's parliament are held by women, and only 3.2% of all ministerial positions are held by women. In the past 50 years, there were only four years with a woman head of a state, 谌贻琴 (*Chen Yiqin*) (WEF, 2021). No woman has been among the nine members of China's top level of decision-making, the Political Standing Committee of the Communist Party (Catalyst, 2021). Considering the significant role of women in national production and education, and the strikingly low status of women in leadership in China, it is necessary to improve global awareness of Chinese women's contemporary status in leadership that so far has not obtained enough scholarly attention. It is our goal in this book to aid in a better understanding of the challenges, opportunities, obstacles, and biases faced by women leaders in China and how awareness of supportive initiatives and policies might help in addressing those challenges.

The research context in China is unique and significantly different from all other countries. First, as the only market-oriented socialist economy, the People's Republic of China contrasts greatly with western free-market economies where a majority of studies on women in leadership have been conducted. Second, it also contrasts with pure central-controlled socialist economies, like North Korea. From social and cultural perspectives, China has been under the influence of Confucian philosophy for thousands of years. Per Confucian beliefs, society was to be controlled and managed

mainly by men, and women were highly discouraged from having any meaningful roles other than as domestic workers. Such cultural traditions remain largely unchanged in people's minds, especially in those generations born before the 1970s. Women's roles as mothers and wives are still strongly upheld as the fundamental duty for women, especially in rural areas. On the other hand, since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese government has effectively promoted the equality of the sexes, and every woman is expected to take part in production and is assigned a job by the government. Women and girls have many more opportunities in education and in the job market, even in higher management positions in government departments and organizations. Later, with China's economic reform and open-door policy in the late 1970s, western values, including feminism, impacted people's thinking and behaviors, such as career choices and life-work balance. Overall, China's unique cultural, economic, and political context provides researchers with rich indigenous knowledge about women in leadership in China.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, The Chinese government has actively promoted gender equality, and every woman is expected to take part in production and be assigned a job by the government (Haile et al., 2016). However, by 2021, China ranked only 107th among 149 countries (WEF, 2021). Despite efforts made to ensure that women's representation is achieved at all levels of governance, women are still underrepresented in many government and nongovernment organizations, particularly in positions of power and leadership (Haile et al., 2016; Sun & Li, 2017). That means that Chinese women are still facing myriad challenges, constraints, and obstacles in pursuing leadership and management positions. A woman who becomes a manager/leader is often called *iron woman* or *female superman*. As the Chinese economy is playing an increasingly important role in the global economy, Chinese management is going global. That brings to the forefront the need to improve the global awareness of Chinese women's contemporary status in leadership that so far has not obtained enough scholarly attention (Sun & Li, 2017; Zhang, 2019).

Based on the above rationale, this opening chapter first defines major terms used in this book and our motivation to write this book, which is followed by the conceptual framework/structure of the book. Then, the chapter presents our study approach, concluding with how the chapters are organized and why.

DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Leadership is always a popular topic in the literature of many disciplines, such as human resource development, human resource management, industrial psychology, and more. Yet, it is hard to define. Kellerman (2014) said that there are 1400 definitions or words for leaders and leadership. Whether the number is true or not, it shows how difficult it is to define leadership to everyone's satisfaction. It is difficult to define because it depends on the researcher's interest, the nature of the problem and the circumstance (McCleskey, 2014).

In Chinese tradition, a leader (领导, *Lingdao*) is the person who is assigned to the position of power and its synonym is boss, executive, manager, supervisor, and someone's superior, which emphasizes the assigned power over his or her subordinates. *Leader* also gives status or honor to the person in power. Therefore, it is more commonly used in the daily language of Chinese and has more to do with personal power when compared to the usage of the word in the west. It is because "rulers and other powerful men and women in China over the centuries have never really had to deal with limits on their power or the sort of checks and balances found in many Western democracies" (Sean, 2014, para. 4). However, under the influence of the west, the connotation of *Lingdao* has shifted to include more responsibilities of leading and managing, such as doing the right thing, creating mission and vision, drafting strategies, and caring about people.

In this circumstance, we would like to borrow from some widely accepted leadership definitions in western literature to define leadership and women's leadership for this book. Leadership can be defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2010, p. 3); it has also been defined as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl, 2006, p. 8). On another note, Kotter (1998) defined leadership as.

most fundamentally, about changes. What leaders do is create the systems and organizations that managers need, and, eventually, elevate them up to a whole new level or . . . change in some basic ways to take advantage of new opportunities. (p. 1)

For this book, *leadership* is defined as a process of an individual influencing a group of others, creating systems and facilitating changes, in order to create new opportunities and achieve shared group goals in a position of power. And, *women's leadership* is defined as a process of a woman influencing a group of others, creating systems and facilitating changes in order to create new opportunities and achieve shared group goals in the position of power.

DEFINING CONTEXT

As we discussed above, the complexity of defining leadership shows the importance of knowing the context in which leadership takes place. Context is also called situational factors that represent different aspects of the environment. In this book, we mainly address three aspects of context: *social*, *cultural*, and *political*.

“Leadership is socially constructed—it is not a physical phenomenon—but rather one that is experienced through social interactions” (DeFrank-Cole & Tan, 2020, p. 6). Therefore, it is critical to examine the social aspect of a leadership context. Ke and Bingham (2022) summarized and presented the indicators from the literature in social aspect as well as cultural and political aspects.

Indicators in the social aspect mainly include women’s roles and status in the family and how women leaders are perceived in society, community, family, and among friends; education systems (literacy, mean years of schooling); human capital (the total combined education of boys/men from primary through tertiary schools); the age of the population; and human health.

Leung et al. (2005) defined culture as “values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns of a national group” (p. 357). We use this definition in the book as it focuses culture at the national level. In this aspect, we look mainly at cultural values and practices; major religions/ideologies/beliefs (collectivism vs. individualism; uncertainty avoidance, gender stereotypes, gender egalitarianism, fate control, women’s self-efficacy); and how women are perceived based on these characteristics.

In political context, we primarily examine basic political systems, such as policies and legislation; women’s political voice; political freedom; and policies of gender equality and workforce gender diversity, such as in the education system.

DEFINING SUCCESS IN DEVELOPING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

The ultimate goal of our book is to help women succeed as leaders in the China context. Our first step to achieve this successfully is to define success in women's leadership development. Based on the definition of women's leadership earlier, success is first reflected in their influence over others in their group, which then empowers more women (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Empowerment can be achieved "through expanding their economic opportunity, enhancing their political involvement, improving their educational attainment, or advancing their health and well-being" (Hartman, n.d., p. 2).

WHO WE ARE

Both authors of the chapter were born in 1970s in China, considered to be the transformed generation in China. The transformed generation is the witness of the great economic transformation in China with the influence of western values that were becoming popular since the 1980s. These women have had the courage to challenge tradition and authority (Sun & Zhuang, 2022). Both of us were born in Mainland China and completed college-level education and accumulated several years of working experience in China before relocating to the United States for Ph.D. education after 2000. Therefore, we have observed Chinese society transforming from a centrally controlled economy to a free-market economy. We observed Chinese women's status, opportunities and challenges while we were struggling to pursue our career development. We share our personal experiences below.

JUDY YI SUN

Judy Yi Sun (associate professor at the University of Texas at Tyler). I was born in Beijing, China, in a small family amidst a giant city of 20 million residents. My father retired as a vice president of a state-owned manufacturing company after working for the same company for thirty years, and my mother was a journalist. Growing up as the only child in my family, I was fortunate to receive undivided love and attention. As with most Chinese families, my grandparents were also part of the household and

influenced me as much as my parents. My grandmother, currently ninety-nine years old and still maintaining decent health, deeply believes in the importance of education. Her belief was firmly instilled in the younger generations and led to the high expectations of my academic achievements. Both of my parents went to college, which guaranteed them better job opportunities and a better living standard while the country was still inundated with poverty.

As a teenager, I traveled a lot with my mother, both domestically and internationally during summer vacations, which expanded my exposure and knowledge about the world. My mother, an elegant woman who always has charming smiles and a friendly demeanor, always says, “life is fair to everyone; it takes some from you, there must be a given elsewhere.” That heals me whenever life is getting tough.

For as long as I can remember, my parents were always busy at their work and seldom at home. As a result, I went to a boarding school at age 12, which sharpened my skills at being independent. I had always been the top student and president of the student council from elementary school through college. As my family always said, “The most important thing to a girl’s life is: you have to be self-reliant; be capable to support yourself.” As I had been independent and academically capable through my school years, I did not realize any gender differences in treatment until I entered the job market. Even though I was the highest-ranked graduate in my class, I lost my first job opportunity to a young man because they did not want to hire a woman. To be more competitive in the job market and to find a job I liked more easily, I took an MBA study. I got married during my years working full time as a Human Resource Consultant with an American company and studying part-time. Fortunately, my husband was very supportive, and we decided not to have a baby until I graduated.

Five years later, I started my journey in academia in the United States at age 35, as a single mom with a 5-year-old daughter. I quit my job as the director in a career development center at a top business school in China and left my hometown to pursue my interest and my passion overseas. Thanks to my family education and my previous professional experience, I learned to be independent, productive, and goal-oriented which is so helpful during my four years Ph.D. journey. I defended my dissertation in the fourth month after my 40th birthday and received the dissertation of the year award from the AHRD association. In the meanwhile, my daughter took education from the US but traveled with me back to China every summer to catch up on Chinese while I was collecting data for my

dissertation study. As a result, she grew up as a fluent bilingual. Now, as a tenured university professor in the United States, my research interest is focused on career and leadership development, and it is my dream to help people understand how Chinese women struggle in their career and family lives to achieve their leadership ambitions.

JIE KE

Jie Ke (associate professor of Human Resource Development at Jackson State University). I was born to a middle-class family and grew up in a small city in the central East of China. My parents worked very hard, but they were not able to go to college due to their family's political background during the cultural revolution and, therefore, barely made enough money to support a family of five. I remember that, for a long time when I was little, we could not make ends meet and always had to borrow money from relatives and friends at the end of each month.

I had two wishes then. One was to buy my mom an electric blanket because the winter in my hometown was very cold and we did not have a heater or any heating systems at home. My mom could not sleep well without holding at least two rubber hot water pouches every night. An electric blanket in bed would be a big help. The other wish was to save money to repay the family debts. Interestingly, the first wish became true not long after as our family financial situation got better after my dad got promoted to a manager of a local tobacco company. And, for the second wish, I studied very hard to stay on top of the class because my parents told me that maintaining good grades, going to college, and getting a good paying job after college were the only ways to make my wish come true. I did manage to get good grades, go to college, and have a decent paying job in a bank, but I was not the one who paid off the family debts. Our family's financial situation was greatly improved when China's economy grew drastically with the open-door policy and the economic reform. Although I did not help our family as soon as I wished, the belief in hard work, a good education, and financial independence stayed with me.

We always had delicious food on the table and decent clothes although we did not have much money. My parents are good cooks, and my mom is an excellent amateur tailor who could make everything, ranging from shoes to school bags to stylish dresses. Having one brother and sister and being the youngest in the family, I was quite spoiled. Although I did

what I could to help, I did not have to cook and clean or do many family chores as most girls in China are expected to do. I did not know what gender discrimination meant for a long time because my family loved me so deeply and protected me so well that I believed that girls were equal to boys, if not more privileged. I was shocked to find out later in my life that it was far from being true for many girls/women in China. I was also not aware of gender limitations. I thought I could do anything as well as boys could.

With the love and support of my parents, I became one of the few first-generation college graduates and one of the two Ph.D.'s in the families of both parents for three generations. What's more important is that the education that I have got throughout years opened my eyes and mind, empowered me in many different ways, and prepared me to fulfill more than just my two wishes/dreams. I travelled to many places in the world on business trips, got my MBA in France, and a Ph.D. in Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University in the USA with scholarships and graduate assistantships. The global journey enabled me to observe different cultures and traditions and make friends with diverse people. Those experiences have made me smile, laugh, cry, be angry, and ponder.

I did not experience discrimination or bias in my own family, and my parents lifted me to be who I am and where I am with their love and trust in me. Even when I moved to a new city and started my first job after graduating from university, I did not experience much gender discrimination in the workplace, though I did notice that top leaders in the bank were almost all men.

I was fortunate as I look back. My education allowed me to pursue my life and career dreams. However, many girls and women in China are not that lucky. From what I have seen, read, and experienced during my academic journey from China to Europe then to the USA, I realize the existence of gender inequality and its damage in developing human resources and talents in China. I hope this book will become the voice of those women who have been marginalized by such a reality.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

As we consider the research on women's leadership in the China context, the following conceptual framework (see Fig. 1.1) was used to organize the body of scholarship and showcase the essentials in the book. The three-layer framework examines Chinese women's leadership from

three different perspectives: *domestic context*, *sector view*, and *international comparison*. Our chapters are organized accordingly based on this framework.

Chapters 2–5 lay the foundation for the book by revealing the domestic context in which women leaders and potential women leaders grow up. Chapter 2 examines the social status of Chinese women, particularly through their family roles. The specific issues under discussion include expectations of family roles of Chinese women with the changing family structure, the conflict between career development and family obligations, the contradictory philosophies in childrearing, and the changing identities of younger generations (Sun & Zhuang, 2022). Chapter 3 utilizes a transdisciplinary approach to examine both the cultural constraints and opportunities for Chinese women from both traditional and modern cultures through historical and global lenses (Liu, 2022). Chapter 4 examines the legal and political environments for women’s development in China. It begins with identifying laws and regulations focusing on protecting women’s rights and interests. It then moves to exploring how China’s current legislative and political structures have promoted or

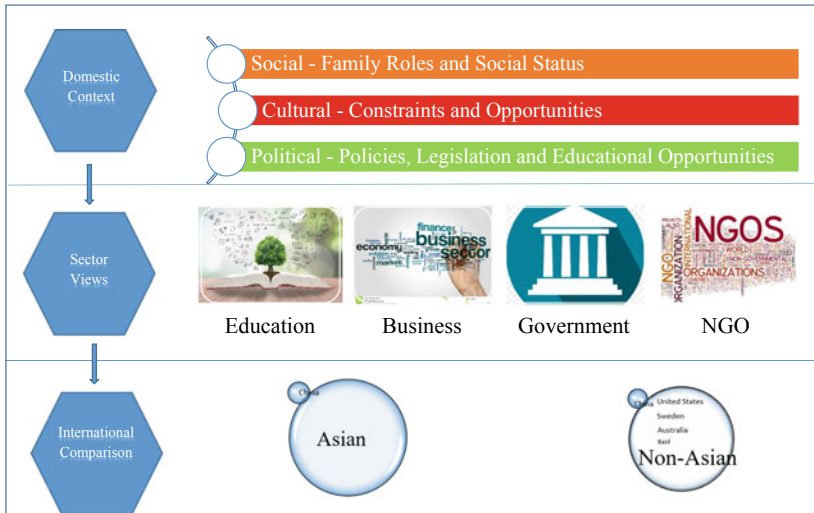


Fig. 1.1 Chinese women’s leadership development conceptual framework and chapter outline

hindered women's advancement (Wang, 2022). Chapter 5 studies specifically the policies of the education system and their impact on developing women leaders through tracing the history of women's leadership from ancient dynasties to present China and explores opportunity disparities along gender, class, and geographic lines (Tong & Lutomia, 2022).

The second layer of the framework analyzes Chinese women leaders across different sectors to build a better understanding of the challenges experienced by women leaders in China and how awareness of supportive initiatives and policies might help in addressing those challenges. Chapters 6–9 focus on women leaders in China in education, business, government, and non-government organization sectors.

Chinese women have been underrepresented in leadership positions in the educational sector and have faced many challenges and problems. Chapter 6 identifies context influences (e.g., political, socioeconomic, and regional conditions) and synthesizes research on women's leadership development in K-12 and higher education in China. The chapter also discusses some important lenses (e.g., androcentric bias) and special issues of women's leadership development, followed by cases that are representative and informative about women's educational leadership development in China (Feng & Fang, 2022).

Chapter 7 reviews the development of private business in China, discusses how the one-child policy changed the society status of women, and explores how this policy affected the women's entrepreneurship in China, while providing official statistics and referring to existing research. The chapter also identifies the strengths and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in China, features of women entrepreneurship, and its relationship to Chinese family businesses (Hsieh & Wang, 2022).

In Chapter 8, Tian and Li (2022) presented the picture of underrepresentation of women leaders in the government sector. To further advance gender equality in government sectors, China needs to overcome several challenges to improve women's descriptive and substantive representation in government positions: equip women with advanced leadership knowledge and skills, raise awareness of gender equality, build and support women's self-confidence, and facilitate women-friendly organizational changes.

There is limited research focused on the Chinese NGO sector, and knowledge of women's roles in NGOs is scarce in China. It is important to understand the factors that influence women leaders' success in Chinese NGOs and highlight their roles. Chapter 9 provides a comprehensive

understanding of NGO women leaders' experiences in China through conducting a qualitative study (Niu & Sims, 2022).

The book then moves to a comparisons and contrast of the state of women leaders in China with women leaders in other countries in and outside of Asia (Coleman & Li, 2022; Ke & Bingham, 2022). The final chapter synthesizes the content of the book while capturing recommendations for practice changes across all of the chapters of the book (McLean, 2022).

OUR APPROACH OF STUDY

Throughout the book, our chapter authors based their studies on comprehensive literature reviews. Some authors moved further and supplied their research with empirical data from cases and qualitative interviews to understand more of women leaders' backgrounds and experiences, as well as obstacles and challenges facing them (Hsieh & Wang, 2022; Niu & Sims, 2022; Tian & Li, 2022). The non-Asian comparison study used secondary data sources, including the World Bank World Development Indicators (WBWDI), the World Bank Enterprise Survey (WBES), the United Nation Human Development Indicators (UNHDI), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the WEF, the World Bank Doing Business Project (WBDB), Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project (GLOBE), and Social Axioms Survey (SAS) (Ke & Bingham, 2022). As appropriate, authors also reflected on their own experiences.

SUMMARY

Why focusing on developing women leaders? Why China? How can we successfully develop women leaders in the China context? To answer these questions, we present the status of women's leadership development in China, as well as the context in which they grow. In each chapter, our authors elaborated on women leaders' current state of working conditions and balancing of personal and professional lives in diverse contexts in China. Additionally, we discussed convergence (commonalities) and divergence (differences) across sectors in China and their comparison with Asian and non-Asian contexts. Many theoretical and practical implications are drawn as well to help women leaders in China reach their

globally transformative potential after many historic changes, especially in the post-pandemic world.

The book focuses on contexts in a way that highlights the unique social, cultural, political, and historic elements of China and the strong influence of these elements on women leaders in the nation. It is our hope that the book can provide intriguing insights into developing the potential of highly qualified women leaders in diverse Chinese contexts in which traditional cultural expectations and modernized values coexist through which critical implications for the development of women leaders in China are generated. It is also our hope to initiate scholarly discussions on what has not been exposed from a dominant western perspective on woman's leadership theories and lessons learned from a uniquely Chinese perspective.

REFERENCES

- Attane, I. (2013). *The demographic masculinization of China-Hoping for a son*. Springer.
- Catalyst. (2021). *Statistical overview of women in the workforce*. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/statistical-overview-women-workforce>
- Cheung, F. M., & Halpern, D. F. (2010). Women at the top: Powerful leaders define success as work + family in a culture of gender. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 182–193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017309>
- Coleman, X. Y., & Li, J. (2022). China in an Asian context. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- DeFrank-Cole, L., & Tan, S. J. (2020). *Women and leadership: Journey toward equity*. Sage.
- Feng, F., & Fang, B. (2022). Women leaders in the education sector. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haile, S., Emmanuel, T., & Dzathor, A. (2016). Barriers and challenges confronting women for leadership and management positions: Review and analysis. *International Journal of Business & Public Administration*, 13(1), 36–51.
- Hartman, M. (n.d.). *Women in power—A theoretical framework*. <http://aaws07.org/english3/speech/6.5.MaryHartman.pdf>
- Hsieh, K. W., & Wang, L. J. (2022). Women entrepreneurs in the business sector. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ke, J. & Bingham, M. J. (2022). China in a Non-Asian context. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Kellerman, B. (2014). *Hard times: Leadership in America*. Stanford Business Books.
- Kotter, J. P. (1998). What leaders really do. In *Harvard Business Review on Leadership* (pp. 37–60). Harvard Business School Press.
- Leung, K., Bhagat, R. S., Buchan, N. R., Erez, M., & Gibson, C. B. (2005). Culture and international business: Recent advances and their implications for future research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 36, 357–378.
- Li, J., Sun, J. Y., Lianjuan, W., & Ke, J. (2020). The development of the second-generation women successors in Chinese family-owned businesses: Implications for HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources Special Issue: Global Women Entrepreneurs*.
- Liu, J. (2022). Cultural constraints and opportunities. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCleskey, J. A. (2014). Situational, transformational, and transactional leadership and leadership development. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 5(4), 117–130.
- McLean, G. N. (2022). Butterflies emerging: Chinese women in leadership. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Niu, Y. L., & Sims, C. (2022). Women leaders in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Sector. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Schein, V. E. (2001). A global look at psychological barriers to women's progress in management. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 675–688. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00235>
- Sean. (2014). *What does "Leader" mean in China?* <https://chinaculturecorner.com/2014/05/12/what-does-leader-mean-in-china/>
- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). Women in leadership in China: Past, present, and future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sun, J. Y. & Zhuang, Y. (2022). Family role and social status. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tian, J. & Li, J. (2022). Women's participation in the government sector. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tong, X. P. & Lutomia, A. N. (2022). Educational opportunities. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wang, J. (2022). Policies and legislation. In J. Ke & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Chinese women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- World Economic Forum (WEF). (2021). *The global gender gap report 2021*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations* (6th ed.). Pearson-Prentice Hall.

- Zhang, X. (2019). *Chinese corporations' understanding of leadership, CKGSB knowledge, China-focused leadership and business analysis*. CKGSB. <https://knowledge.ckgsb.edu.cn/2019/09/18/all-articles/leadership-styles-chinese-corporations/>
- Zhu, X., Cooke, F. L., Chen, L., & Sun, C. (2022). How inclusive is workplace gender equality research in the Chinese context? Taking stock and looking ahead. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(1), 99–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1988680>



Family Role and Social Status

Judy Yi Sun and Jane Yuting Zhuang

“Women hold up half the sky!” Proclaimed by Chairman Mao, this phrase has been familiar to every Chinese person since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. In fact, China has gone through a long journey in seeking gender equality in the past seven decades. With an above-average world record of labor force participation, Chinese women have been held up as a model for women in Asia. Through the persistent efforts of women leaders in China to participate in socioeconomic activities, they now hold 32% of senior management positions in Chinese organizations (Haile et al., 2016). China was also ranked ninth worldwide by the percentage of senior roles held by women, which outweighs the world average percentage of 24%. The top nine countries include five countries from the former Soviet Union, including Russia

J. Y. Sun (✉)
University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, USA
e-mail: jsun@uttyler.edu

J. Y. Zhuang
Shanghai Lixin University of Accounting and Finance, Shanghai, China
e-mail: yuting.zhuang@qualitative-studies.org

(45%), Lithuania (37%), Estonia (37%), Latvia (35%), and Poland (34%). The other three ranked above China are developing countries from South Asia: the Philippines (39%), Thailand (37%), and Indonesia (36%) (Greef-hofstede, 2017). However, women in China still have a long way to go in achieving gender equality. By 2021, China ranked 107 in the rankings of 149 countries according to the World Economic Forum's gender-gap report. Despite efforts made to ensure that women's representation is at all levels of governance, women are still underrepresented in many government and non-government organizations, particularly in positions of power and leadership (Haile et al., 2016; Sun & Li, 2017).

The aforementioned data only indicates a misalignment between the social perception of Chinese women studied by cultural researchers and the reality of women in leadership. So, what is the reality? What is the current social status of Chinese women?

Through a comprehensive review of both English and Chinese literature while integrating our personal observations as both Chinese women and HRD scholars, in this chapter we examined the social status of Chinese women specifically through the transition of Chinese cultural, economic, social, and political contexts, particularly through their family roles. It is our hope that the examination and analysis of Chinese women's social and family status will facilitate a better understanding of women in current Chinese society. Feasible recommendations and discussions are compiled for the government, organizations, and researchers to improve the gender equality and the social status of Chinese women as a whole.

Social status used to be defined as "the level of social value a person is considered to hold." More specifically, it refers to the relative level of respect, honor, assumed competence, and deference accorded to people, groups, and organizations in a society (Truyts, 2010). In order to understand how women were valued, respected, and honored by the Chinese society, we first need to understand what norms and social expectations Chinese women are facing, which comes in two folds: traditional cultural norms and values and the rise of feminism within Communism.

TRADITIONAL CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS

In traditional Chinese culture, it has been a social norm that women were inferior to men. It is evidenced in ancient Chinese Epistemology. According to the famous Chinese theory of yin and yang, people believe the world is made up of yin and yang. Yin and yang and their interaction formed the basis of an ancient Chinese cosmology (Sun & Li, 2017). Yin means dark, earth, cold, negative, death, and the north side of the mountain while yang means the complete opposite: light, heaven, warmth, positive, life, and the south side of the mountain. Unfortunately, the ancient Chinese cosmology assigned yin to women and yang (阴阳) to man, which then froze them in a rigid hierarchy of submission and dominance. Therefore, women were dominated by men for nearly two thousand years, and this gender hierarchy has been evident everywhere in Chinese society historically, and still keeps unchanged even in the current Chinese society.

Since Confucianism was widely adopted in the Qin dynasty, the three cardinal guides become a core value of Chinese society: Emperor rules over Subject, father rules over son, and husband rules over wife (Sun & Li, 2017), indicating the comparatively lower social status of women in China, especially a role within a family as wife. Compared to the Qin dynasty, the latter Qing dynasty was under the influence of Western concepts of feminism, which led to a significant transformation in the social status of women in China. The establishment of the People's Republic of China led to a more equal gender representation in the workforce, thus leading to a higher social status for women. However, both the value attributed to the three Confucian cardinal guides and women's traditional family role still had influence over those who were born before 1970 with children or grandchildren that were around marrying age. This population plays a significant role not only in the national economy but also in families, creating a significant social obstacle that pressures the younger generations to fulfill the traditional family roles of women in households.

Bounded by these conservative social norms, the women in China throughout history had no right to pursue their personal interests, and couldn't make important decisions in their lives independently. They could not own property under their own names, not to mention the economic and political power. The most degrading era in history for

the social status of Chinese women was in the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE) when the foot binding of women became a common cultural phenomenon. Women’s foot binding lasted almost a thousand years until the late Qing Dynasty (1622–1912 CE), totally limiting the range of activities and mobilities of women, thus enhancing men’s paternalistic control and authority over women (Sun & Li, 2017).

Women’s rights were also limited in educational opportunities in traditional Chinese culture. Girls were taught to be subservient to men in the house and to learn the virtues of being docile and obedient since they were little. Skills and knowledge they could learn was limited to cooking, sewing, and housekeeping. They were not entitled to education until the end of the nineteenth century (Wolf, 1985).

The traditional family roles women were expected to fit in were illustrated well in Lu (2016). Lu commented that in the Chinese traditional value, the success of women is judged in terms of their capability in assisting husbands and nurturing children (“相夫教子”). Because of this social stereotype, the career development of married women is perceived by Chinese society as second to their fulfillment of family roles. The rise of Chinese women leaders in modern times was shaped by a cultural paradox. On the one hand, the traditional culture of Confucianism with a strong masculine tendency hindered the potential career developments of women; on the other hand, the social and political system built upon Communism left opportunities for feminism, along with an international culture of post-modernism and individualism that was brought into China through globalization. Being a women leader without fulfillment of family roles was “culturally unacceptable” in Chinese tradition, but “politically right” under the Communist system, the desire for self-actualization through leadership does not seem wrong in the international culture. Some researchers argue that the Communist culture in China, in many ways, has reinforced aspects of traditional culture, such as Collectivism and harmony (Bush & Haiyan, 2000). The concept of “family harmony” promoted by the government influences an individual’s career, especially for women. A lot of consideration is given to the family status such as “marriage stability” and “family harmony” in important career decisions like promotion and work assignments.

THE INFLUENCE OF FEMINISM ON COMMUNISM

Since the birth of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) paid close attention to protecting women's employment rights and interests as an essential measure to improve gender equality. The government intervened through legislative, administrative, economic, media, and educational mechanisms to promote women's participation in the workforce (Sun & Li, 2017). Significant investment was made in childcare facilities to relieve this burden on working mothers. This intervention has provided considerable adjustment in pay and social equality for women workers (Cooke, 2010). The real improvement in the social status of women was evident in the following passage from the basic law implemented in 1950:

The People's Republic of China shall abolish the feudal system that holds women in bondage. Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, educational, and social life. Freedom of marriage for men and women shall be put into effect (Article 6). (Li, 2000, p. 353)

Despite the party's continuous effort to guarantee the social status of women, the actual progress of the rise of feminism in China in the past seven decades is inconspicuous. The policies implemented by the CCP have made certain that Chinese women could no longer be forced to stay at home. Instead, they have the right to enjoy the same educational opportunities and almost the same job opportunities in many industries as men. While the traditional value of the authority of father and husband within the family remained mostly intact in rural areas, women in urban areas are now having as much authority and freedom as their husbands in and out of their families.

We must admit that for several decades promoting women's participation in the labor force was mostly to serve the interests of the CCP. From mobilizing women to allowing women to join in agricultural production since the 1950s, the emancipation of women was largely measured by numbers, such as how many were in the workforce, and by how many were enrolled in political organizations, rather than incorporating women's viewpoints into decision-making processes (Zhu et al., 2022). Despite increasing participation in various sectors, the representation of women in Chinese society at decision-making levels actually has been consistently low, indicating that the political and social strength of women

did not fundamentally change until the rapid economic development of the 1990s (Sun & Li, 2017).

The Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995, and it was the first time that women's rights in China became globalized. The Chinese government affirmed the gender equality principle and admitted that the gender gap remained as a significant problem that needed to be addressed in order to improve the situation (Attane, 2013). To correct this situation, the CCP has initiated a series of programs for the development of Chinese women (Attane, 2013). The first period of the program (1995–2000) focused on promoting equality between spouses and deterred domestic violence and women trafficking while encouraging political participation and representation in government bodies. The second period of the program (2001–2010) aimed at protecting women's rights and interests, including education, equal access to employment, economic resources, and health care. The newest and third phase of the program started in 2011, targeting persistent discrimination against women in the development of a market economy and international competition (Attane, 2013).

In a centrally controlled nation, the emancipation of women was always led by governmental and CCP policies, not by grassroots activists. For instance, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF, 2011), a patron group that champions women's causes, led by the CCP government, has mainly played welfare and supportive role in helping women regain employment. In contrast, the ACWF has not campaigned against layoffs and gender inequality in employment, such as gender pay gaps and discrimination in recruitment and promotion. Among the few cases when Chinese feminists made efforts to voice themselves, a group of Chinese feminist protesters was detained for staging a protest before International Women's Day in 2015 but was subsequently released due to public outcry.

MARRIAGE WORK AND IDENTITIES

The pattern of traditional Confucian patriarchalism is also manifested in the pattern of marriage, in which most people subscribe to a traditional view of a woman's role as supportive of male endeavors. Chinese patriarchalism is demonstrated by younger Chinese women marrying much older Chinese men. It is also prevalent in the "marrying down" phenomenon, wherein well-educated men marry less well-educated women (Ji & Yeung, 2014). Due to the age differences and education

level differences, usually, it is expected that the husband provides more guidance and financial support to the family while the wife is expected to play a heavier role in housework and chores. These social and family expectations created a lot of role conflicts for women who are pursuing a professional career.

Family–Work Role Conflicts

A successful woman leader is often referred to as a “strong woman” (女强人), which indicates a derogatory attitude toward women who decide to go against the traditional roles of women in Asian culture and lead a successful career. When there is a conflict between work and family, many women tend to give up their careers for family reasons due to social pressure. When Jie Zhang (张洁), CEO of Huadan Angel Investment fund in 2011, began her entrepreneurship journey in 2005, she encountered severe objections from both her family and her university, because entrepreneurship went against the social perception of women (Uraceo, 2015). She consistently struggled to balance family and work over the years, while her husband never came across the same question in the same managerial role (a CEO of another start-up company) (Lu, 2016). In other words, married women who have the multitasking skills to balance work and family might be more likely to have a successful career.

Identity Conflicts

As discussed above, China is still a patriarchal society for the most part, in which most people subscribe to a traditional view of women’s roles as supporters of male endeavors. Women are valued for being humanistic, people-oriented, and empathetic to the feelings and needs of others—and they have been deliberately educated that way by society. By contrast, women leaders are considered “ambitious” and “aggressive”—an identity that is not congruent with the “virtuous wife and caring mom” (贤妻良母) that was discoursed at great length in history and highly valued in Chinese culture (Zhao, 2008, p. 78).

Zhao and Jones (2017), drawing on a qualitative study, interviewed nine academics in Chinese universities that drew attention to identity and discourse as an aspect of the problem of women’s underrepresentation in higher education leadership. They then analyzed how these women in academia construct multiple identities. According to this study, only 4.5%

of mainland China's higher educational institution leaders are women (Zhao & Jones, 2017). The findings illustrate how women's identities are shaped and constrained by dominant historical and cultural discourses in Chinese society. A key finding from the research is that the women academics tend to reject the "leader" identity, which is true for those in middle management positions, as well as women in early career stages, who might otherwise aspire to leadership.

Although the employment rate of women in China is currently among the highest in the world, with almost three out of four women in the labor force (World Economic Forum, 2021), the historical and cultural constraints still strongly influence women, which leads to many predicaments in pursuing career and leadership.

One of the participants in Zhao and Jones (2017) said, "I take care of the daily chores all by myself. Because my husband is an intellectual who needs much quiet time, it means that his thoughts cannot be easily interrupted. Hence, I have to do more housework. I think men should do great things, and women should get small things done. This is my principle of doing things. At noon I go back home to cook, and then in the morning, I get up at 6:00 a.m. to prepare breakfast. For example, there are seven kinds of soup and a variety of dishes for breakfast in one week because I think breakfast is the most important. Then lunch and dinner (Zhao & Jones, 2017)."

This short paragraph portrays a Chinese Women's routine as well as her thinking. They believe "men should do great things, and women should get small things done" even if she has a full-time job and/or hold an administrative position in academia.

Another participant also shared her experience: "I was among the top candidates for promotion at that time. My performance was outstanding and I have good qualifications. My husband was sick so I wanted to take care of him more. And my father-in-law asked me to think more about my family, not only about myself. So I decided to give up that promotion and even changed my job to this university that is closer to my home."

Traditionally, universities are viewed as centers of intellectual liberty, change, and human development, but literature on leadership in higher education generally reveals that women are less likely than men to participate in upper levels of administration. Leadership in higher education is still a patriarchal world, and universities are still male-dominated institutions. This is just an example from higher education, not to mention other traditional industries.

It was reported in March 2021 that 77.7% of female survey participants believe women are capable of taking leadership roles in organizations and enterprises. According to, one of the largest online recruiting company databases, while the salary level of women, in general, is still 12% lower than their male counterparts, the pay difference has decreased continuously since 2019. The difference has gotten narrower in the past two years which indicates a minor equality issue in China in terms of pay.

“Glass Ceiling”

“Glass ceiling” has been a popular topic that has frequently appeared in scholarly journals of China in the past decade (Liu et al., 2018; Qu, 2019). Researchers analyzed the “Triple glass ceiling” (Qu, 2019) phenomenon among women managers. The glass ceiling has nothing to do with their capability but has everything to do with the social expectations of women. Psychologically, most women were influenced by traditional culture and believed that women’s values are largely determined by the role they played in the family instead of in the workplace. The above-mentioned negative stereotype term of “iron woman/strong woman” is used to describe women who focus on their career instead of their family roles. Therefore, some women were influenced by this kind of thinking and decided to choose a more stable job with fewer development possibilities. This focus on family roles that blocks them from career opportunities is thought of as a glass ceiling. The second category is “role glass ceiling,” which refers to the role conflict Chinese women experienced after having a child. After leaving their job and taking on the role of mother and wife for a while, they come back to a job, but may not be able to adjust to their work-related roles. They may also undertake the pressure from their family, urging them to take family responsibilities in addition to their job responsibilities. The difficult adjustment and a lack of support from family might affect their courage to advance their career. The third category is the “organizational glass ceiling” that is from the employer. Influenced by the serotype thinking of women, employers always prefer male candidates to women when they promote managers that push women away from senior positions.

The last category captured the obstacles experienced by most women managers from the human capital perspective. Employers have a perception that women managers who have more family responsibilities might lead to less commitment and less investment in their job. Second, these

employers believe it is not worth investing in women managers, because it is believed that women will terminate their careers at some point in time due to marriage, birth-giving, or nursing (Qu, 2019).

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF CHINESE WOMEN

If we want to discuss the family roles of Chinese women, it is no help if we only look at the general population. Since China has experienced significant social and economic transitions, the transformation of the society is evident in the changing mindsets and behavior patterns demonstrated by different generations of Chinese women. Li coined terms for the five generations of Chinese women: The Communist generation (born before 1940), the Lost generation (born between 1940 and 1960), the Lucky generation (born between 1960 and 1970), the Transformed generation (born between 1970 and 1980), and the E generation (born after the 1980s). The Communist generation experienced great tribulation of wars and famine with the greatest impact by Chinese traditional values. The Lost generation experienced many significant political movements including the Culture Revolution that destroyed the social system to a great extent and shifted both people's values and social norms. They are the testimonies of the market economy. These two generations have retired but still have a strong influence on younger generations through family roles like wife, mother, and grandmother.

The Lucky generation is so-called because they took full advantage of the market economy, and obtained more career opportunities and freedom. Compared to their counterparts, many of these adventurers became the most successful women in China with accumulated wealth and leadership. The Transformed generation is the witness of the great economic transformation in China. With the influence of Western values that was becoming popular since the 1980s, these women dare to challenge tradition and authority. Lastly, the E generation is the generation under the Chinese Government's "single child policy." They enjoyed political and economic stability more than any older generations. These five generations cover the full age range of Chinese women, and each generation experienced unique social changes that had a great impact on their lives and helped shape their identities in different ways. Particularly, the E generation grew up with a growing impact from Western values and culture but was educated in families with traditional culture. It is interesting to know their experienced expectations and life roles.

Contemporary Culture Fusion and Younger Generations

The contrast between the images of young Chinese women and those of the Maoist years is sharp and heightens the significance of drastic societal change (Riley, 2019). For instance, role conflicts are frequently reported in the literature, especially in studies examining Chinese women (Li et al., 2020; Zhao & Jones, 2017). The female interviewees in Li et al. (2020) expressed frequent concerns about achieving work–life balance, particularly about their prospects of marriage and having children while pursuing a professional or entrepreneurial career. This was less of an issue for the E generation, as these young women were born with the internet and more influenced by Western culture and international trends. They grew up watching the same movies, sharing the same news, playing the same games, and listening to the same music as other kids in the rest of the world.

With the widespread and rapid development of the e-economy, more job opportunities are presented to these young women that involve less gender consideration, some even favorable to women. E-commerce anchor (电商主播), also called e-commerce live streaming, is a great example. The e-commerce industry developed rapidly in the last decade in China, providing bespoke customer experiences through Video-Powered Retail. These online businesses allow one to connect with customers and provide full Livestream solutions to build brand awareness, which increases engagement and conversation without the upfront cost. Growing up with it, the E generation is familiar with the e-economy to the extent that it is easier for them to start a business as an e-commerce anchor. The independence, freedom, and fun nature of this type of job is more consistent with their value system. In addition to the small initial investment and low sales cost, more women have participated in this type of business to make money and can reach a work–life balance at the same time. Many women e-commerce anchors became millionaires in recent years, such as the famous Li Ziran whose videos on YouTube have attracted 4.5 million fans internationally. It is not uncommon that a wife makes more money in the e-industry than their husband who is in a traditional industry. The changing economic situation of women with a family also influenced the women’s family status in general. These women are no longer stuck in a supportive position from a finance and economic perspective.

More younger generation women go to entrepreneurship as well. In a study examining second-generation women entrepreneurs (Li et al., 2020), the young women participants demonstrated confidence in obtaining future business opportunities and new technologies that would help with their entrepreneurship. Most of them had a bachelor's and some even master's degrees, with all of them being strongly encouraged by their parents to advance their education at home or abroad. Fortunately, the structure of contemporary Chinese society and family provides these ambitious women with valuable opportunities and different expectations. However, the evidence collected from this study also indicated that a significant degree of social support is needed to support these young women in order to advance their entrepreneurship careers.

It is worth noticing that the motivations of women entrepreneurs and their desire to take leadership roles in businesses are influenced by geographical environment as well. It is reported that women entrepreneurs in Beijing emphasized achievement, independence, and opportunities as the top three motivations in their career pursuit, which is in contrast with their older counterparts who are more family-oriented and used to consider their family more than their own careers (Li et al., 2020).

Likewise, educated women tend to marry later due to their career endeavors, with the average age of first marriage for women in 2011 being 23.6 years increasing to 26.3 years in 2017. The average age of first marriage for women in Anhui Province is even increased to 30.73 years in 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021). This is coupled with another interesting phenomenon: many highly educated and high-income women tend to remain single. Almost 50% of highly educated women (post-secondary education) are unmarried, who showed less willingness to go to marriage than their male counterparts at the same age group and same education level (World Economic Forum, 2021). The increasing number of highly talented women is causing serious work–life balance issues with little time for personal life and much social pressure to get married. They are called *Sheng nu* (剩女), or “leftover women,” conveying disapproval and dissonance with social expectations (Gaetano, 2014; Sargeson, 2014). This group of women has long been a topic of concern in Chinese society that prioritizes marriage and motherhood for women (Sun & Li, 2017).

Another example, Kim et al. (2018) examined how a cohort of urban youth born under China's one-child policy have developed flexible gender identities through their childrearing aspirations and educational

and occupational narratives, choices, and trajectories between 1999 and 2014. Drawing on surveys of 406 respondents conducted in 1999, 2012–2013, and 2013–2014, and interviews of 48 of those respondents, they found that the young female research participants were more capable of producing flexible gender identities than their male counterparts. It also reflected that China's new market economy increasingly rewards the youth who are flexible enough to adjust to rapidly changing circumstances. This is an approach more compatible with the flexible gender identities produced by young women than the more rigid gender identities produced by young men.

Neo-Familism

Most recently, Yan (2021) coined a new term to describe the young Chinese families as Neo-familism. His research, titled *Chinese Families Upside Down*, offers the first systematic account of how intergenerational dependence is redefining the Chinese family and goes beyond the conventional model of filial piety to explore the rich, nuanced, and often unexpected new intergenerational dynamics in China. Under the influence of Neo-familism, the young generation of women may have more power to voice themselves since they are dominating the parenting responsibility. It is beneficial for women to improve their family status according to the improved importance in the major function of the family. However, it may also mean much more pressure on women of childbearing age. The importance of having a child is no longer only a family need, but also strongly encouraged by national policies. In China educating a child has been viewed as a critical criterion to measure a women's value to the family. It ultimately gives women more social pressure from an ethical perspective that further limits women's effort in personal development, because a failure to have children or in educating a child is ethically unacceptable to both Chinese families and the society.

It is not surprising to see that an increasing number of women of childbearing age decide not to get married and not get children. It is not only a change in lifestyle but more importantly a rebellion against social pressure. Both the workplace discrimination of women of childbearing age and the lack of benefits support contribute to these women's decisions to be in a "DINK" (dual income and no kids) family. With the E generation playing increasingly important roles in both families and the

Chinese society, it is important to understand them better and to address the unique challenges they are facing.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter describes the role and position of Chinese women in contemporary social, political, economic, and family life. It is obvious that the lives of Chinese women have long been constrained by ideas, ideology, and practices that resulted in gender inequality and women's subordination (Riley, 2019). This is reflected in how many Chinese women are struggling to balance family and work and to have flexible identities that permit them to be accepted in social activities and work environments. While the family is still absolutely a key to the shape and direction of life for most Chinese women, younger generations of women have started to explore a changed lifestyle and new value orientation that led them to more independence, freedom, and gender inequality.

No matter in which generation, Chinese women are definitely facing social and cultural barriers in pursuing leadership in their personal and social life. Examples of these barriers are traditional social norms, cultural expectations, the choice and/or balance between work and family, and fear of success (Zhu et al., 2022). There is no doubt that there are success stories of women in political, educational, and organizational settings, but the efforts women have made to rise above their circumstances and fight for recognition are hardships one can only imagine. The reality is that while women gain certain freedoms by facing social and cultural challenges, other freedom may be lost. There is a scarcity of research found that investigates these situations.

Considering both the current transitioning nature of the Chinese society, and the changing political policies that will influence the future generations, the social status of Chinese women is improving, but still faces challenges, especially in leadership positions in most traditional industries and entrepreneurship. Examples abound of efforts that have been made to include and involve women, but for the most part, these are superficial changes. Examples of these changes are: minimum quotas of 30% women are introduced by certain parties, and the constitution was changed to allow for representation by women. However, on careful examination of the situation, one finds that implementation is lacking (Zhu et al., 2022). Even though Chinese women in younger generations have achieved better education compared to their male counterparts,

they are still subject to pay differences, fewer promotion opportunities, and other career obstacles due to the traditional cultural constraints that influence people's mindset (Zhu et al., 2022).

Because China enacted a one-child policy for the last thirty years, women in younger generations, as the single child in the family, have been able to reduce the effect of the traditional customs of Zhong Nan Qing Nu (重男轻女-daughters are inferior to sons). Therefore, they have been motivated to participate in higher education and receive better working opportunities, including the possibility of inheriting family businesses as successors. However, with the end of the government's "one-child" policy in October, 2015 and the new policy of encouraging three kids for each family, these changes may not be able to continue (BBC, 2021). Will Chinese patrilineal culture reassert itself so that sisters lose out to brothers again in the fight for resources and education opportunities? China has witnessed a resurgence of the patriarchal Confucian tradition in recent years (Sargeson, 2014), and that might potentially diminish the social status of women and their positions in the family again (Sun & Li, 2017).

With the improvement in social status, Chinese women managers have more opportunities to use their own "voice." Nevertheless, due to the shackles of the traditional mindset and the imbalanced development of the society, gender inequality and gender discrimination still exist that impede the leadership development of women. Gender equality awareness and related strategies should be integrated into various socio-cultural, political, and economical guidelines, policies, and procedures. The government and organizations should establish and disseminate a knowledge system with gender equality as the core, abandon the outdated gender stereotypes, and eliminate the attitude of opposing women in work settings. A discourse mechanism should be constructed that encourages free expression, different opinions, and appreciation of diversity with the recognition of women's values and unique leadership (Hao, 2018).

Actions to improve the status of women have so far mainly come from government policies in which a minimum ratio is set for women politicians and women leaders in government organizations and in political congresses. More effective approaches to help promote women's status in other areas are needed. Furthermore, fair legislation from the State level and effective human resource management policies from the organizational level are needed to create a level playing field for women to compete with men. Changes are also needed from the public and from

the grassroots of society. Chinese society needs to be educated to look at women leaders in the same way as their men counterparts.

Women in younger generations are more ambitious and are having more flexible identities that will benefit both themselves and the society. They are fighting harder against the traditional cultural constraints and social pressure in order to obtain independence and autonomy in dealing with life-work balance and trying to pursue careers as independent women. It is our hope that Chinese society is providing more tolerance to these brave young women and providing better support. This can allow them to demonstrate their unique leadership and contribute not only to their families but also to the Chinese society. It is also our hope that the implications from this chapter will inform women in other Asian countries that share similar cultural roots and socioeconomic contexts.

REFERENCES


- ACWF (All-china Women's Federation and National Bureau of Statistics in China). (2011, October 21). *Report on major results of third wave survey on the social status of women in China*. Resource Equity. <https://resourceequity.org/record/228-report-on-major-results-of-the-third-wave-survey-on-the-social-status-of-women-in-china/>
- Attane, I. (2013). *The demographic masculinization of China – Hoping for a son*. Springer.
- British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, May, 1). 中國人口：政府允許生育三胎 網民稱“問題是一個都不想生” [*Chinese population: The government encourage three children in each family, Netizens: “we don’t want any children”*] BBC Chinese Channel. <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinese-news-57305871>
- Bush, T., & Haiyan, Q. (2000). Leadership and culture in Chinese education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 20(2), 58–67.
- Cooke, F. L. (2010). Women's participation in employment in Asia: A comparative analysis of China, India, Japan and South Korea. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(12), 2249–2270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2010.509627>
- Gaetano, A. (2014). “Leftover women”: Postponing marriage and renegotiating womanhood in urban China. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(2), 124–149.
- Geert Hofstede. (2017, July 7). *National culture*. Geert-Hofstede. <https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>

- Haile, S., Emmanuel, T., & Dzathor, A. (2016). Barriers and challenges confronting women for leadership and management positions: Review and analysis. *International Journal of Business & Public Administration*, 13(1).
- Hao, Y. (2018). The silent women: The restraint, the lacking, and the reconstruction of voice among female managers. *Journal of Jiangnan University (social Science Edition)*, 35(4), 57–65.
- Ji, Y., & Yeung, W. J. (2014). Heterogeneity in contemporary Chinese marriage. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35(12), 1662–1682.
- Kim, S. W., Brown, K. E., & Fong, V. L. (2018). How flexible gender identities give young women advantages in China's new economy. *Gender and Education*, 30(8), 982–1000.
- Li, J., Sun, J. Y., Lianjuan, W., & Ke, J. (2020). The development of the second-generation women successors in Chinese family-owned businesses: Implications for HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources Special Issue: Global Women Entrepreneurs*.
- Li, Y. (2000). Women's movement and change of women's status in China. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 1(1), 30–40.
- Liu, Q., Li, Y., Zhang, L., Yang, W., Du, Z., & Huang, H. (2018). An empirical study on female leaders' social recognition. *Industrial & Science Tribune*, 17(8), 132–133.
- Lu, N. (2016). 商界“她”时代 [Her-story in business]. *东方企业家 [New Business Leaders]*, 11, 22–37.
- Qu, Z. (2019). The discussion on female managers' career development obstacles. *Human Resources*, 4, 99–106.
- Riley, N. E. (2019). Gender equality in China: Two steps forward, one step back. In *China briefing* (pp. 79–108). Routledge.
- Sargeson, S. (2014). Leftover women: The resurgence of gender inequality in China. *Gender & Development*, 22(3), 587–589.
- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). *Women in leadership in China: Past, present, and future*. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J.Y. Sun, & Mclean, G. N. (Eds.), *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Truyts, T. (2010). Social status in economic theory. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 24(1), 137–169.
- Uraceo. (2015). 不做女人，做女投资人 [No being a woman but a female investor]. 福地 [Weekly]. <http://www.wtoutiao.com/p/189csZs.html>
- Wolf, M. (1985). *Revolution postponed: Women in contemporary China*. Stanford University Press.
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *The global gender gap report 2021*. World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- Yan, Y. (2021). *Chinese families upside down: Intergenerational dynamics and neo-familism in the early 21st Century*. Brill.

- Zhao, J., & Jones, K. (2017). Women and leadership in higher education in China: Discourse and the discursive construction of identity. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(3), 21.
- Zhao, K. (2008). *Life cycle and career patterns of academic women in higher education in China today (master's dissertation)*. The University of Oslo.
- Zhu, X., Cooke, F. L., Chen, L., & Sun, C. (2022). How inclusive is workplace gender equality research in the Chinese context? Taking stock and looking ahead. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(1), 99–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1988680>



Cultural Constraints and Opportunities

Jackie Jinfang Liu 

During the twentieth century, China experienced dramatic changes in all aspects of Chinese society, whose scales and depth were not seen in any other country (Morrison, 2019). Some examples include the overthrow of the last imperial kingdom of China–Qing (1644–1912), the establishment of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in 1912, the Chinese Enlightenment movement—*May Fourth New Culture Movement* in 1919, the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 and People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, and China’s economic reforms in 1978 (Yan, 2017). In the past four decades, the Chinese Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown almost 100 times, from \$149 billion in 1978 to about \$14 trillion U.S. dollars in 2019, challenging the U.S. economy for the number one spot by 2028 (Burden, 2020; World Bank, 2019). And China already “ranks first in terms of economic size on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis, value-added manufacturing, merchandise trade, and holder of foreign exchange reserves” in the world

J. J. Liu (✉)
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN, USA
e-mail: liux2774@umn.edu

(Morrison, 2019, p. 1). In 2020, more Chinese companies than U.S. companies are shown on the list of Fortune 500 companies with 124 Chinese and 121 U.S. companies (Murray & Meyer, 2020).

During the last four decades, China has completed the first three industrial revolutions and has been engaging in the fourth one, which totally transformed China from an agricultural country, to a labor-intensive manufacturing one, to a talent-rich and innovation-driven nation now, from *made in China* to created in China (Fukuyama & Zhang, 2011; Moon, 2018). In 2012, Chinese President Xi highlighted China's development timeline of the *Two Centenaries*: by 2021, when CCP has been established for 100 years, China will become a well-off nation in all aspects; by 2049, when PRC will be founded for 100 years, China will realize *the Chinese dream*—the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. By then, China will become a prosperous, democratic, civilized, and harmonious socialist modern nation (Tiezzi, 2015). To ensure China's rapid development to be sustainable and the competitive advantage to be strong enough to survive in severe global competitions, China has made medium and long-term technological development goals with detailed phased goals to make China's development innovation-driven in all aspects by 2050; in 2018, China ranked number two worldwide in terms of the investment on Research and Development behind the U.S. (Deloitte, 2019). Currently, China is leading the 5G technology of the world and will become “the world centre of AI [artificial intelligence] innovation by 2030” (Roberts et al., 2021, p. 59). Chinese companies Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent have been tasked with the development of autonomous driving, smart cities, and computer-based medical diagnoses.

However, “economy and gender equality are not necessarily the two sides of one coin” (Alter, 2015, para. 10). The rapidly changing Chinese society and the globalized world demand Chinese women to change rapidly as well. With both family and professional obligations, Chinese women leaders must navigate their own route to pass through cultural constraints from everywhere in their lives (Lee, 2017). In a globalized world, the cross-cultural approach, which often uses a Western lens to examine non-Western culture, can represent neither the non-Western nor the Western cultures (Kitch, 2007). Thus, in this paper, I use a transdisciplinary approach to review both modern English literature and Chinese classical discourse to critically examine both the modern and traditional cultural constraints and opportunities for Chinese women's leadership development.

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS FOR CHINESE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Challenges in Chinese Women's Real Lives

Misaligned with China's rapid economic development, China's gender equality ranking worldwide has dropped rapidly from number 63 in 2006 to number 106 in 2020 out of 153 countries based on the *World Gender Gap Report* (WEF, 2021). From 2006 to 2020, the ranking of Chinese women's economic participation and opportunity dropped from 53rd to 91st; and the ranking of Chinese women's political empowerment fell from 52nd to 95th worldwide. The measures of gender equality in terms of women's *Health and Survival* has been remaining the worst worldwide since 2015 (WEF, 2015, 2021). It is mainly due to China's lowest female-over-male ratio at birth in the world. Combined with China's one-child policy since 1978, the traditional gender bias that men are superior to women (*nan zun nü bei*) and a daughter is worth only half of a son (*yi nan ban nü*) make the excess female infant mortality rate increase from 10% in 1970 to 60% in 1995 (Li, 2015). Although China started to allow a couple to have a second child from 2016, the Chinese sex ratio at birth was still only 88.5%, and much below the world average ratio of 94% (WEF, 2021). With only 88 girls compared to 100 boys at birth in China, Chinese men outnumber women by 34 million, and the "missing women" underscore China's biggest gender gap on women's *Health and Survival* in the world (Denyer & Gowen, 2018; WEF, 2021, p. 15).

With the focus on the economic development after the death of Chairman Mao, many affirmative feminist initiatives (e.g., supporting urban women to work) to emancipate women during socialist era have been withdrawn by the government in post-socialist time (Fincher, 2014). Although no country has achieved gender equality, some Chinese women start to backlash and claim that "Chinese women have achieved equal rights with men except for very rural areas" (Wang, 2014, p. 50). In the 1990s, the Chinese translation of the term, *feminism*, was changed from *nüquan zhuyi* (female-right ism) to *nüxing zhu yi* (female-genderism) (Zhu, 2015). In 2007, All-China Women's Federation officially announced that single women, who are older than 27, are considered *left-over women* (*shengnü*) indicating that no men want to marry them due to the concern of pregnancy (Wei, 2016). As Confucius established his life at the age of 30 (*san shi er li*), many Chinese believe that young people

should have their careers, families, and children by age 30, and men normally marry down with younger women (The Analects: Weizheng, Chinese Text Project). In 2016, Chinese men and women's average ages at the first marriage were 27 and 25 (Kopf, 2020). Despite many different views about how old women should be regarded as being left over based on the education level and urban or rural China, the term *shengnü* is included in the official lexicon of China's Ministry of Education (Fincher, 2014). Since then, single educated women are discouraged from pursuing ambitious academic and career goals but pressured to get married before age 27 to avoid being left over. Unable to get married before age 27, single women Ph.D. holders are often mocked as a sexless "third gender" (Kuo, 2014, para. 1). From 1978 to 1995, Chinese government broke the "iron rice bowl" with an equal allocation of national resources to everyone, and the rich classes and various wealth gaps are shown in post-socialist China (Fung, 2001, p. 258). Instead of pursuing "iron rice bowl" in China, many women now pursue the "rice bowl of youth" to use youth and beauty to find jobs and marriage (Hua, 2013, p. 99). Wu and Dong (2019) pointed out an entrepreneurial Chinese feminism from Chinese grassroots, which encourages women to work hard to improve their marriage market values by appearing beautiful, young, virtuous, loyal, and chaste. Although most Chinese words about all women regardless of ages, titles, and education already have negative meanings, such as *hong yan huo shui* (Beautiful women are disastrous flood) and *mu yecha* (female monster at night), the derogatory words against women in the twenty-first century does not become less but the neologism is even more disrespectful to women, such as *xinji biao* (calculating bitch), *lücha biao* (green tea bitch), and *nüquanbiao* (feminist whores) (Wu & Dong, 2019; Yang, 2001).

In the twenty-first century, Chinese women face direct and sometimes intolerable discrimination in almost every aspect of their lives (e.g., age, gender, personal life, income, political power, employment conditions) (Wei, 2016). Women are discriminated against during the whole process of their work from recruiting, job interviews, income, promotion, training, and leadership opportunities, until retirement. Due to the pregnancy, maternity, and nursing leave that women have to take, which bring less profit but more cost for employers, many Chinese employers directly reject women job applicants (Wei, 2016). "[One] out of 25 female employees have been forced to sign a contract with clauses like

prohibition from marriage and pregnancy in a certain period” (Wei, 2016, p. 18). Some Chinese universities only hire women faculty with children to guarantee their academic productivity not to be influenced by marriage, pregnancy, and maternity leaves (Gu, 2016). Many job ads have requirements for women’s physical attributes (e.g., heights, shape, appearance) that are not related to job duties (Wei, 2016). Many young women college students feel they have to do cosmetic surgeries to increase their employability, as most young job applicants’ capabilities do not vary much and employers tend to hire good-looking ones (Hua, 2013). Compared to 13% in 2017, 19% of Chinese job lists in both 2018 and 2019 specified preference for men job applicants (Human Rights Watch, 2020). During the transition of the Chinese economy from a planned economy to market economy, the gender income inequality has been increasing remarkably (Iwasaki & Ma, 2020). Compared to the U.S.’s gender pay gap of 18.5% in 2019, the Chinese gender pay gap in 2019 is 21.8%, which means the average income of Chinese women is only 78.2% of their men’s counterparts (IWPR, n.d.; Zheng, 2019). In addition, the small gender pay gap in lower positions masks the big gap in higher positions. Zweig and Han’s (2010) research found that on each educational level, the income of Chinese women with overseas education is lower than men. However, women doctoral degree holders only earn 59% of their men counterparts, compared to 82% at master’s degree level and 95% at bachelor’s degree level. Although 45% of Chinese labor force is women in 2020, only 17.5% of top managers are women (WEF, 2021). And the gender income gap of China is much greater in the rural areas and private-owned sectors than in the urban areas and state-owned enterprises (SOE) (Iwasaki & Ma, 2020).

In addition, women’s legal protection in China is shockingly scarce (Fincher, 2014). Although the constitutions of the PRC always state that women and men enjoy equal rights in all areas of a socialist Chinese society and there are many anti-gender discrimination laws in China (e.g., the Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests), the enforcement mechanisms to protect women’s rights are few and ineffective to deter gender discrimination (Sun & Li, 2017). Therefore, when several women sued the gender discrimination in job ads in 2013, the employers who violated the laws just got some fines of the low hundreds of U.S. dollars (Human Right Watch, 2020). Led by the CCP, the All-China Women’s Federation plays “a welfare and supportive role,” instead of an advocating role for women (Sun & Li, 2017, p. 24). Therefore, All-China

Women's Federation can help women participate at work, but cannot help them combat workplace gender discrimination. In addition to the gender discrimination at work, the Chinese Marriage Law can leave women homeless after a marriage ends; and it was not until 2016 that China passed the first domestic violence law (Leggett, 2017). Chinese stereotypes against women as naggers or sexy clothes wearers, who invite men's impulses to behave violently toward women, legitimize men's violent behaviors and excuse men from being fully responsible for their sexual violence (Tang et al., 2002). Unfortunately, All-China Women's Federation women officials, who are supposed to support women, tend to do victim-blaming to blame women domestic violence victims for not tolerating but challenging husbands at home by having a "deficient mouth" (*zui qian*) (Yang, 2007, p. 107).

Although women's emancipation in China has always been done in a top-down manner from the government, ineffective top-down policies resulted in more and more grassroots Chinese feminist protests from the bottom to voice women's rights (Wu & Dong, 2019). After seeing Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein's arrestment in 2018 due to his sexual offenses, a Chinese woman, Xianzi, posted her sexual harassment experience by one of China's most high-profile CCTV (China Central Television) hosts, Zhu Jun on social media (Ni, 2020). Since then, the terms, sexual harassment and #MeToo have started to appear in Chinese mass media, and several university women students in China alleged their professors and university authorities' sexual offenses against them. Unfortunately, several years after Xianzi fought for Chinese women's rights in sexual violence, in December 2020, the landmark legal case of Xianzi's sexual harassment in a Chinese court was ended with the loss of Xianzi (Gan & George, 2021).

Chinese traditional cultural norms still greatly challenge working women now. The statistics of the All-China Women's Federation shows that 61.6% of men and 54.8% of women still held the traditional opinions that men take charge of matters outside home and women take charge of matters inside home (*nan zhu nei, nü zhu wai*) in 2011 (Wei, 2016). Women are still regarded as primary caregivers, who are expected to stop their career and leadership development to take care of families. Although Chinese women contribute to almost 45% of the labor force and 41% GDP in China, and the percentages are higher than most countries in the world, at home, the time Chinese women spend on household work is three times that of men, and one-sixth of Chinese women's lives

are spent on unpaid family work (Bloomberg News, 2019; WEF, 2021; Vanham, 2018). 85% of Chinese said work–life balance is hard for working mothers and having children would negatively impact women’s career advancement toward the upper echelon (Catalyst, 2020). Different from most countries in the world, where much more men commit suicide than women, in China, due to Chinese women’s lower status in love, marriage, and family issues, the male–female suicidal rate is 0.95 in 2016, indicating Chinese women commit a little more suicides than Chinese men (WHO, 2016). Zhang et al.’s (2002) research found that married Chinese women and people in rural China have a higher risk of suicide than unmarried women and people in urban China, and 24% and 38.7% women’s suicides were caused by family disputes and marriage issues.

Given the lack of protection for women in China, China’s newly passed divorce regulation in 2021, which requires a couple to have a month-long cooling-off period with both parties’ agreements to file a divorce, makes it hard for women to even seek divorce freely after suffering from domestic violence (Kuo, 2020). Many Chinese couples rushed to use scalpers to jump ahead in the long line to file a divorce at the end of 2020 (Gerstein, 2021).

Chinese Traditional Cultural Constraints

The patriarchal history of China with men’s domination of power and society started 3000 years ago (Hao & Zhou, 2007). The original writing of the character of a woman 女 in oracle is a woman getting down on her knees and obediently putting her hands in front. As the core of Chinese culture, Confucianism outlined and legitimized Chinese patriarchal society and the dominance of men in Chinese society through systematic education and social institutions (Birdwhistell, 2012). Confucian propositions, *Wu Lun* and *Three Cardinal Guides* emphasized five traditional cardinal human relations including the husband–wife relationship and the husband’s guiding of the wife (Sun & Li, 2017). The founder of Confucianism, Confucius (551 BCE–479 BCE), once said that “only women and small-minded men are hard to deal with,” which established the negative tone of Confucianism against women in China (Lee, 1994, p. 1). Although excluded from the official education system before 1911, Chinese women could still receive education at home. However, unlike men’s education for career success, the aim of traditional Chinese women’s education was to educate women on how to be a filial

daughter, virtuous wife, and sacrificing mother. Women and men had totally different textbooks in Confucianism. *Admonishment for Women*, *Analects for Women*, *Admonishment for Imperial Concubine*, and *Records of Model and Virtuous Women* were called the *Four Self-Accomplishment Classics for Women* and used as textbooks for women in traditional China (Lee, 1995). As the first known woman historian in China, Ban Zhao (45–116), the author of *Admonishment for Women*, claimed that the first goal for a woman's development was to be humble and weak, which was the foundation to maintain harmonious relationships with the husband and in-laws to avoid being abused or divorced (Lee, 1994). In her book, she emphasized the importance of women's education to support the husband and family, which was summarized as *Three Obediences* (a woman should obey her father as a daughter, her husband as a wife, and her sons in widowhood), and *Four Virtues* (morality, proper speech, modest manner and appearance, and diligent work).

Around China's Song Dynasty (960–1279), Confucianism developed into an extremely strict form, Neo-Confucianism (Blake, 1994). Girls were encouraged to bind their feet until they were only three inches in length so they could not walk or even stand firmly. Women were also educated by societal culture to never go out of the main entrance and stay inside the second gate of the home (*da men bu chu, er men bu mai*), so women could only work at home. Two kinds of domestic work occupied a traditional Chinese woman's whole life: raising children and serving the husband (*xiang fu jiao zi*), and weaving at home while men work in the field (*nan geng nü zhi*), and women's weaved products were often sold by the husband in the market. Song Dynasty's Neo-Confucianism also promoted *widow chastity*, which discouraged widows' remarriage but encouraged widows' suicides (Rosenlee, 2006). Since then, Chinese women were put at the lowest level of society until the development of Chinese feminism in the twentieth century.

Gender is not born but created by society. Fairclough (2013) claimed that gender identity and bias are constructed and reinforced through discourse. As living fossils of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese characters recorded a traditional Chinese woman's whole life (Yang, 2001). Chinese characters have a pictograph-based system with a phonogram and ideogram (Cook, 2001). People can often read the meaning of a Chinese character directly from visual signs. Chinese characters consist of single characters and compound characters. A single character is one inseparable part representing pictographs. The compound Chinese characters

mix several single characters as components. The radicals are the shared components of characters, which can represent the meaning or pronunciation of compound characters. *Shuowen Jiezi* is one of the oldest Chinese dictionaries of the second century, including about 238 characters with woman radical 女, many of which are still commonly used now (Yang, 2001). If we put the characters about women's lives in Chinese patriarchal society together, a traditional Chinese woman's whole life (e.g., appearance, virtues, marriage) is visually presented:

The first important thing for a woman was to be weak 弱 (woman + weak). She must be beautiful 妙 (woman + must). Beauty 好 (woman + give) was what she should give to men. The standard of a Chinese beauty 嫵 (woman + beauty) was a delicate 娟 (woman + silk) woman with red lips and white teeth 姝 (woman + red), beautiful eyes and eyebrows 媚 (woman + eyebrow). Her skin should be as white as jade 娃 (woman + jade), and her dark skin was ugly 黧 (woman + black). When standing, she should cross her legs 姣 (woman + cross) and have a elegant posture (姿). An elegant 媚 (woman + dangerous) woman was dangerous. It was safe 安 (woman under a household) to let women work at home. A woman, who knew nothing, was charming 妩 (woman + nothing) as women impaired 妨 (woman + square) men.

After a marriage plan 媒 of her parents, a man took her to his home 娶 (take + woman) to marry. The wedding 婚 (woman + dusk) should be at dusk due to the inferiority of women. To marry a man 嫁 (woman + home) gave the woman a home. A wife 妻 (*qi*) (weaving + woman) was a woman who matched (*qi*) the husband and did housework at home. A man 男 (field + power) was the power who worked in the field. A married woman (*fu*) 妇 (woman + broom) should obey and serve (*fu*) her husband, holding a broom to clean the house. Pregnancy (*ren*) 妊 (woman + task) was the task (*ren*) of a woman. After delivering a baby (*mian*) 娩 (woman + remove), the woman could be removed (*mian*). A good 好 (woman + son) woman delivered a son; otherwise, she was not a good 孀 (no + woman + son) woman. As a mother 母, she fed the baby by putting her nipples into the mouth. Busy with housework day after day, year after year, she became an old hunchback woman 嫗. Her husband got 纳 (woman + inside) concubines (*qie*) 妾 (woman + stand) to continue (*jie*) to have babies. Therefore, it was a good idea to have young girls 妙 (woman + young). The concubines 妍 (woman + together) worked with the wife together at home during the daytime, but entertained 娱 (woman + sing/dance) the husband at night. The wife and concubines

must be happy 嬉 (woman + happy) to entertain the husband. Otherwise, it was women's fault to tempt men to go whoring 嫖 (woman + money). Although the wife had a higher position than the concubines, she could not envy and hate the husband 妒 (woman + household). Jealousy 嫉 (woman + disease) was a woman's disease. A wife should be always loyal to her husband even when she became a widow 寡 (woman + permanent). As a virtuous woman, she should always do the correct thing 姪 (woman + correct): shutting up her mouth 如 (woman + mouth) and following the husband 媿 (woman + tail) as his tail. A woman with benevolent talking was hypocritical 佞 (woman + benevolence). Two women together were quarrelsome 妯 (2 women). Three women together were treacherous 姦 (3 women). As the husband 夫 is the heaven 天 of women, it was appropriate 妥 (hand + woman) for the husband to use his hand to hold a woman's hair to beat her. A woman's disobedience 妄 (woman + death) invites men's scary power 威 (weapon + woman) to kill her. After her children grew up, the old wife could die 妣 (woman + peers) as one of many old women.

The Chinese characters clearly recorded the traditional gender roles and bias in Chinese society and families, which not only legitimize the gender inequality in China but also construct an obedient personality of Chinese women (Yang, 2001). *Qu Cong* (hear and obey the wrong judgments from the mother-in-law without arguing) was what Ban Zhao taught wives to do in *Admonishment for Women* when women had the husband's love and the mother-in-law's hatred. The obedient characteristics of Chinese women may still show when many Chinese women tend to accept life adversities as something unavoidable (*ni lai shun shou*) (Martin-Matthews et al., 2013).

Unfortunately, a modern Chinese woman's life is not necessarily better than its predecessors. In addition to traditional cultural constraints from Confucianism, modern Chinese women also have the modern cultural constraints from globalization, which is also known as Westernization or Americanization (Green & Griffith, 2002).

Modern Cultural Constraints from Globalization

The Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century forced the last imperial Chinese government-Qing (1644–1912) to reopen the Chinese market to the West, and China entered into a modern history (FMPRC, n.d.). Many Western and Chinese scholars in the twentieth century attributed

China's loss to the West to traditional Confucian culture (Tang, 2015; Weber, 1964). In 1905, the 2000-year-long Confucian education and examination systems were abolished by the Chinese Qing government (Gan, 2002). In addition, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), the founder of Modern Chinese Nationalism, attributed the underdevelopment of China to the underdevelopment of Chinese women with their bounded feet, who made up half Chinese population (Zhang, 2012). In 1919, China's Enlightenment movement—*New Cultural Movement* tried to use Western democratic culture to replace Confucianism and brought Western feminism and a generation of Chinese “liberal-leaning feminists” to China (Wu & Dong, 2019, p. 474). During 1966 to 1976, Chairman Mao organized the socialist *Culture Revolution* with an attempt to use socialism to eradicate Confucianism and capitalism. The socialist feminism through the All-China Women's Federation has led women's development in the PRC.

In 1995, the United Nations (UN)' fourth world conference on women in Beijing not only initiated the largest scale of women's empowerment movement on the global stage with 189 countries but also marked a groundbreaking step in Chinese women's empowerment (Moser, 2005; Sun & Li, 2017). However, 25 years later, the reviews of the largest scale of the women's empowerment movement are “almost universally negative” (Milward et al., 2015, p. 75). Without clear definitions and deliverables, the gender equality work just became a performance or an on-off exercise to tick the gender box in diversity reports for men decision-makers without real transformation of the men-dominated world. Many post-feminists and women have a backlash against feminism, and criticized feminist movements as anti-family, anger, and causing conflicts and tensions with other people, which are against women's benefits (Cai & Clement, 2016). In practice, women's empowerment not only failed to address its original feminist goals, but also could become neocolonial projects to use Western ideology to control developing economies (Clisby & Enderstein, 2017). Excluded from a hegemonic discourse of educated white middle-class heterosexual women, women of color, working-class, disabled, or lesbian and bisexual women are marginalized in a Western-centric feminist agenda.

Unfortunately, if the formula to make a traditional Chinese woman was *Three Obediences + Four Virtues* = a traditional Chinese woman, based on Crenshaw and Bonis' (2005) intersectionality concept, a modern Chinese woman's identity intersects the discriminations from both Chinese and

global patriarchal cultures including the discrimination from gender, sexuality, race, religion, height, physical appearance, and so on. For example, in ancient China, women were worried about losing men's love as their beauty waned (*se shuai er ai chi*) (Hanfeizi: Shuonan, Chinese Text Project). However, in modern China, not only are most traditional Chinese beauty standards still used to evaluate women instead of women's capabilities, but Western aesthetics are also included in China (Hua, 2013). The Chinese word, *mo deng* is from English word, modern, which describes modern Chinese women with both Chinese and Western beauty. In 2017, the Chinese plastic surgery market was worth \$14.9 billion, which made China the second-largest plastic surgery market in the world right behind the U.S. (Daxue Consulting, 2020).

The intersection of capitalist and patriarchal interests has twisted feminist gender-equal credo and women's knowledge of independence to "be responsible for maintaining ultra-slender body" (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006, p. 221). To lose weight and gain physical attractiveness may seem like women's personal choice for self-improvement and self-control. However, it is socio-cultural pressure that patriarchal culture and capitalist market economy have created for women through mass media (e.g., fashion magazines, advertising, social media, fitness centers, movies, etc.). Even women with successful careers are also concerned about becoming fat after delivering babies (Hesse-Biber et al., 2006). Women's pursuit of thinness and physical beauty booms the market economy by bringing lucrative business for beauty industries, but subordinates women by using their own money from their hard work to buy beauty products to allow patriarchal values to control their body, appearance, money, energy, and self-esteem (Faludi, 1991). In the end, they just buy a downstream women's identity to meet various men's needs. Kim (2007) warned feminist scholars to be alert to "the contemporary force of global capitalism and (neo)imperial impulses shaping realigning communities (p. 109)."

Almost 100 years ago, one of the earliest Chinese feminists, Lu Xun, criticized that women's expenses on making their body and face more attractive were so expensive psychologically, rather than materially, as the pursuit of physical beauty cannot bring women the love and happiness they desire, but low self-confidence to compete men's love with prostitutes (Lu, 1934). Lu Xun radically pointed out that the patriarchal society was the cause of women's tragic fates (Lu et al., 2003). Without changing patriarchal culture, even if a modern woman accepted Western feminist theories, and strived to lead her own life as a "new woman," she would

eventually return to a traditional woman's life as a sacrificing and submissive daughter, wife, and mother, or be rejected by everyone in a society (Chien, 1994, p. 33). Another early Chinese feminist, Ding Ling also pointed out the problems of Western feminism, which has broken the traditional woman's identity, but failed to tell the "new woman" how to survive in a patriarchal world (Chien, 1994, p. 33). Leaving a traditional social world with traditional relationships does not guarantee the entrance of "a network of agape" with all loving people around, but a new "disciplined society" with other established relations, social norms, and problems (Taylor, 2004, p. 66). Without a way to survive in a patriarchal world, a "new woman" would eventually return to a traditional woman's life for survival, and her dream of gender equality would just become everyone's "regret for the past" (Chien, 1994, p. 33).

Lu Xun and Ding Ling's prophecy seemed to become true 100 years later. In 2017, more than a third of Fortune 500 women CEOs resigned, which made the small percentage of women CEOs' representation in the business field fall down from 6.4% in 2017 to 4.8% in 2018 (Mejia, 2018). Before stepping down, a senior woman executive, Anne-Marie Slaughter posed her controversial question in the *Atlantic*—Why Women Still Can't Have It All? (Slaughter, 2012). Her question immediately raised more questions from many women: What does having it all mean? Have it all that men have? Can women just have without giving? The more time a woman spends on work, the less time she can spend with her family. Will having-it-all remain the same when the woman is 20 and 40 years old? Before stepping down, the former Pepsico CEO Indra Nooyi, directly claimed that "the idea of *having it all* is an illusion that comes with painful sacrifices and tradeoffs" with the damages of health and family (Forbes, 2014, para. 1).

With pragmatism and instrumentalism as the assumption of most women's empowerment approaches, women are often treated as the means to develop human capital for families, organizations, and societies, rather than the end to achieve women's own well-being (Unterhalter, 2007). Whether being a superwoman to solve all crises for men and satisfy all their needs including being a maid to obey, a toy to entertain, an angry warrior to fight, a victim to be blamed and abused, a scapegoat for the failure of the organization as a woman CEO, or being a sacrificing and submissive wife, mother, and daughter, an iron woman who can *hold up half the sky*, or a *left-over* woman to be mocked, could be all "pseudo" and just the products of different forms of patriarchal culture from feudalistic,

capitalist, or socialist patriarchy (Dickerson, 2016; Downing & Roush, 1985, p. 700; Stacey, 1983). 110 years after the first Woman's Day was started by the socialist party in the U.S. in 1909, China had a debate about the Chinese translation of the *Women's Day* on the March 8 among the *Day for girls* (*nü sheng jie*), *queens* (*nüwang jie*), and *goddesses* (*nüshen jie*) from commercial marketing discourse, or traditional women with a broom (*funü jie*) from patriarchal culture (IWD, n.d.; Zhang, 2019a). All different women's identities that have been created with the assumption of pragmatism and instrumentalism could have one real use: a woman tool to serve a patriarchal society. The biological woman tool is likely to be replaced soon by non-biological AI tools. Haraway (2006) proposed using a new monster-like woman identity of "cyborg" with the hybrid of human and machine to transcend traditional binary gender identities (p. 148). Now the gender and AI research have already developed "Cybrog I" and "Cybrog II," and posthumanists are discussing how to shape "post-woman" identity in a patriarchal AI world (Ferrando, 2014, p. 42).

However, one thing notes mentioning. Although gender equality is often evaluated by calculating the numbers of the gender gaps of boys/men-vs-girls/women, gender equality should not be defined by women having all that men have (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Patriarchal culture also created *toxic masculinity*, which provides a hero illusion for men that leads to men's crimes, suicidal, depression, stress, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted infections (e.g. HIV), poor self-care, finance management, and social communication, more violent death, and eventually shorter lifespans for men with more widows (Kupers, 2005). Currently, despite postmodernists' repeated emphasis on the unknown nature of the world in an already "post-post period," post-humanists have calculated the human future based on the exponential development rate of science: after postmodernism, the human race would experience from antihumanism to the dominance of AI, until eventually voluntary human extinction to achieve the replacement of "the exclusivist patriarchal setting with a pluralist inclusiveness" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 26; Ferrando, 2013, p. 26). By 2030, AI would surpass the intelligence of the whole human race; by 2045 non-biological humans would become the creators and masters of biological humans and terminate the biological human era to achieve AI's singularity (Kurzweil, 2005). If the Western centric and androcentric science with a focus on short-term data and benefits

provides the equal extinction of the human race as the solution to achieve gender equality and pluralist inclusiveness, Chinese women may have to wear Chinese long-term lens to seek a humanistic approach to survive (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

At the end of the twentieth century, Chinese feminist Liu Suola pointed out modern Chinese women's confusion by asking a series of questions:

What is it that you really want? Do you want to get hold of something? Or get rid of something? Perhaps you don't know? Even if you knew, perhaps you dare not speak it out? Even if you have said that, perhaps you don't believe you can do it? (Liu, 1993, p. 53)

Instead of men's career aspirations of upward linear work-based promotion with high-level managerial power by winning in competitions, women tend to appreciate holistic life satisfaction with a balanced development of both work and family through relational interactions with colleagues and family members (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Liu, 2013). The goal of women's self-development is to achieve "reciprocal relationality" with others (Qin & Lykes, 2006, p. 179). However, in an individualist culture and a fragmented postmodern world, it seems like "telling tales" to make "separately existing individuals" (including many married couples) unite with a "separately existing other" peacefully (Hosking, 2011, p. 47).

CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHINESE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Despite the cultural differences in Hofstede's cultural dimensions, there are "pancultural gender role norms that create opportunities and constraints for all women leaders" at work, family, and in society across cultures (Cheung & Halpern, 2010, p. 190). Confucian culture could be both an "impediment and stimulus" for the development of China (Zurndorfer, 2018, p. 1). Although the U.S. and China seem to take the top two positions in many aspects of the world, China's suicide rates fell by 55% but the U.S.' suicide rates increased by 45% between 2000 to 2019, which made China one of the lowest and the U.S. have one of the highest suicide rates (WHO, 2021).

Although gender inequality is a global concern, in the developed industrialized countries, “where democracy and capitalism reigns supreme, inequality is sometimes more marked than in other regions” (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 286). As a socialist country, China’s egalitarian beliefs and institutions still aim to treat women and men equally in Chinese society (Iwasaki & Ma, 2020). Although China has a wider gender gap than Nordic countries, China’s gender gap, which is ranked number 106 worldwide based on the 2020 World gender gap report, is smaller than China’s two Confucian neighboring nations: Japan and South Korea with the rankings of number 121 and 108 (WEF, 2021). Chairman Mao’s slogan that *women can hold up half the sky* is still true in China in terms of labor force participation, which has long been above the world average record (Zeng, 2014). In 2019, 46.9% of women worldwide and 60.5% of Chinese women participated in the labor force (Catalyst, 2020). With one of Asia–Pacific’s highest women’s labor force participation rates, Chinese women have been acting as a model for Asian women for a long time.

Instead of gender differences, the main source of China’s national inequality is the East, West, and Center regions of China (Sicular et al., 2020). During the early stage of China’s economic reform from 1978 to 1995, the Chinese government allowed some people and regions in Eastern and coastal areas to get richer first (Iwasaki & Ma, 2020). Consequently, the social inequality has been worsening until the worst situation in 2015. From 1995 to 2007, China’s gender wage gap widened substantially and progressively (Song et al., 2020). In 2014, Chinese President Xi pointed out China’s development has entered a *new normal*. Different from old GDP-oriented growth, the *new normal* is a new economic development model with a focus on promoting comprehensive development and social equality of a society in a sustainable way (Nie, 2016). Thus, China slowed down the double-digit economic growth rate before 2011 to maintain a growth rate between 6 and 7% until 2019; and China’s economic growth rates during 2022 to 2025 are estimated to be between 5.8% and 5.49% (Textor, 2021). Opposite to many pessimistic views that Chinese economy is declining, the slower growth rate is a sign that China’s enormous economy has passed the startup stage and is beginning to mature to develop in a comprehensive and sustainable way (Nie, 2016). Song et al.’s (2020) research found out that China’s gender income gap has been narrowing since 2007 although the change is not robust. The improvement of women’s education, the increase of single educated women, governmental policies of birth control, parent-leaves,

and minimum wages all have helped more urban women participate in the workforce and contributed to the decline of China's gender income gap (Song et al., 2020). For women in rural China, as most men in rural China work in urban cities as migrant workers, the main workforce in rural China is women, whose education and skills will determine the development of rural China (Sun & Li, 2017). To improve the skills of women in rural China, the Chinese government has promoted a policy of *building a new socialist countryside*. In addition, although compared to the U.S., Chinese government does not have strong policies to support the private economy, Chinese government has a series of policies to encourage women entrepreneurship to ease women's unemployment pressure, such as loan and tax benefits; 55% of China's new internet businesses were founded by women (Cooke & Xiao, 2021).

Cheung and Halpern (2010) compared women leaders from Chinese, Anglo, and Latino cultures. Working long hours only triggered work-family conflict for women leaders in Anglo cultures. In collective cultures, time conflicts of women leaders between work and family obligations do not necessarily cause work-family conflict (Yang et al., 2000). Instead of the clear distinction between family and work domains in individualistic Western cultures, the Chinese society views family and work as an interdependent integral (Liu, 2013). Instead of seeing a wife's overwork as sacrificing the family for her own career advancement in the West, a wife's working long hours due to her leadership roles in Chinese culture is regarded as her sacrifice for the whole family's financial betterment (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Liu, 2013). Instead of seeing a wife's career success as a threat to her husband through an individualistic lens of competition and power struggles, a wife's career accomplishment is regarded as a family's collective asset in China.

As one important relationship among Confucian *Wu Lun*, Chinese have always paid great attention to the husband-wife relationship. Ban Zhao claimed that the relationship between a husband and a wife in *Admonishment for Women* was as important as Yin-Yang in the universe, which created everything and connected humans with God; and how a person managed the husband-wife relationship was the test of that person's ethics. Due to Chinese strong patriarchal culture, Cheung and Halpern (2010) originally expected to find out strong cultural constraints from Chinese families towards Chinese women leaders' work. However, to their surprise, not only all Chinese husbands of the Chinese women leaders provided great spousal support as the "biggest fans, cheerleaders,

coaches, and mentors,” but the extended families of Chinese women leaders also provided reliable social support with child care (p. 187). In contrast with Western women leaders’ difficulty of finding reliable day care for children, Chinese “grandparents traditionally help with domestic work and childcare,” which enables Chinese women leaders to focus on their work (Liu, 2013, p. 489). Cooke and Xiao’s (2021) research found that Chinese women entrepreneur’s success is highly attributed to the strong family support from their parents and spouses. They particularly praised Chinese husbands from Chengdu city in Sichuan province in China as the better half for women, because of Chengdu husbands’ cooking, cleaning, and doing housework for their wives. This result probably would be challenged by Shanghai husbands. Besides doing housework for wives, historically, Shanghai husbands were known for playing mahjong with the wife and her friends, knitting sweaters for the family, making facial masks and beautiful dresses for the wife, carrying the wife’s purse, make good financial management and investments for the family, and providing the wife with both psychological, physical, financial, national, and international support, which made Shanghai husbands number one ahead of number two—Chengdu husbands, on the ranking of China’s hen-pecked husbands (*qi guan yan*) in 2014 (Sina, 2014).

In contrast with the “self-assured and confident” attitude and “egalitarian values” of Chinese husbands, the biggest challenge for women leaders in the West is the lack of husbands’ support for their career advancement (Cheung & Halpern, 2010, p. 187). Although Anglo societies desire a higher level of equality, the degrees that Anglo societies endorse authority, power, status privileges, social inequality, and gender inequality are “rated in the middle range” worldwide (GLOBE, 2020, para. 1). Anglo culture is men-dominated with the emphasis on competitiveness and individualism. The mate selection in the West is to marry down, which means men like to marry shorter, thinner, less educated, and less paid women. Although the gender gap in educational attainment means women have higher education than men in the U.S., the advantages men have from the gender pay gap in the U.S. make women with higher education still marry men with higher income (Qian, 2017). Therefore, women’s remarkable educational achievements in the U.S. have not changed traditional women’s gender roles much in the U.S. families. In the West, a woman leader’s superior social status may threaten her marriage by challenging her husband’s self-assurance (Cheung &

Halpern, 2010). In contrast, family support is an important motivation for Chinese businesswomen to pursue their career in a hostile men-dominated business world (Chao & Ha, 2019; Liu, 2013). Many Chinese women's businesses are family-based (Chao, 2011). China's rapid economic development is largely indebted to Chinese traditional values of harmonious relationships with others, loyalty, and family (Zurndorfer, 2018).

Ha et al.'s (2018) research found that Chinese women leaders showed the feminine and traditional side of women when they appreciated their husbands' support and partnership for the family needs and the wives' career development. As food plays a very important role for a family's union, Chinese women leaders showed great gratitude for their husbands' cooking for the family as they understood the social pressure for husbands to cook (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). All Chinese women leaders desired to accommodate their traditional expectations as a good wife and mother to support the husband and educate children, while "negotiate for another identity" as a good woman leader (Chao, 2011; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ha et al., 2018, p. 9). Instead of the work-family conflict, none of Chinese women leaders regarded family as an enemy of their work, but the way they define their self-identity, their primary goals and tasks, and the source of their higher psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction. The Chinese women leaders do not think the social expectations for them as daughters, wives, and mothers are the oppressions from traditional culture, but the foundations for them to expand their women identities with the development of society (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). One of the key leadership styles of many Chinese women leaders is that they treat their followers as family members with emotions (Chao, 2011). How Chinese women leaders managed family and career obligations made them better understand, support, and develop young working women than men leaders (Chao, 2011; Ha et al., 2018). Chinese women leaders' support for other women's leadership development makes women's voices stronger in the *Old Boy Club* of leadership team. This is one important strategy that Chinese women leaders used to break the *glass ceiling* effect, which stops women from being promoted to leadership positions. This is very different from the "suicidal politics" for "women to disown one another" in the West (Klein, 1991, p. 131). Whether women's *gender war* with men, women's *catfight* against other women, senior women leaders' *Queen bee syndrome* to oppress their women subordinates, or different

doctrines of feminists' arguments in the West all lead to negative relationships and conflicts among women and others, or even the "mutual assured destruction" (Reinke, 2010; Seo et al., 2017; Sheppard & Aquino, 2014; Young, 1999, para. 1). A woman "Robinson Crusoe" is not independent, but extremely vulnerable in a hostile uncertain globalized patriarchal world (Taylor, 2004, p. 65).

In the West, the long-lasting identity dilemma "between needing to act as women and needing an identity not overdetermined by our gender" (Buszek, 1999, p. 38), between breadwinners and caregivers, between agentic leaders' identity and communal women's identity, between "tough as nails and warm as toast" (Wilson, 2007, p. 23), between a woman's leadership identity and the followers' acceptance of a woman's leadership identity, often result in women executives' discomfort and abandoning their senior roles (Eagly, 2005). Cooke and Xiao (2021) claimed that men-dominated media often distorted successful business women as a *superwoman*, who does not need to struggle hard to start up a business, or an *iron woman*, who behaves like a tough man without a harmonious family life. This misleading education would either destroy women's enthusiasm to become a woman leader, or mislead women to believe that they have to be as tough as men to become a woman leader. Chinese women leaders proved that their feminine qualities can be strengths in masculine leadership environments (Lee, 2017; Liu, 2013). Chinese women leaders' feminine characteristics, such as gentleness, self-control, consideration for others, flexibility, human (not heroism)-centered, power-sharing, long-termed, and holistic thinking, defensive rather than aggressive position, all help them communicate and work harmoniously and smartly with followers, stakeholders, and their husbands as well as build important *guanxi* in men-dominated business world. Chinese women leaders' soft leadership approaches allow others time to accept those women leaders' legitimacy and credibility to lead in a men-dominated world based on their professionalism, diligence, and wisdom instead of their gender (Chao, 2011; Ha et al., 2018; Liu, 2013). Zhou et al (2012) found out that Chinese women directors had significantly enhanced staff's organizational commitments and organizational values, especially when the institutional values were not good.

Despite Chinese patriarchal culture, "[h]istorically in China, men always have great reverence for women who can hold people together and preserve the harmony of the family or country" (Liu, 2013, p. 488). Although China had a 1000-year-food-binding practice from the Song

dynasty's (960–1279), the first 2000 years of the 5000-year-long Chinese history was matriarchal (Hao & Zhou, 2007). Oracles from about 3000 years ago recorded a large number of inscriptions about goddesses, women officials, and so on, showing that women held honorable social status in the matriarchal society. The Chinese character, surname 姓 (woman + birth) visually showed the matriarchal origin of surnames. The two Chinese earliest ancestors 5000 years ago—Huang Di (*Yellow emperor*) and Yan Di (*Red emperor*) both used their mothers surnames—姬 (*Ji*) and 姜 (*Jiang*), which were two oldest Chinese surnames (Duan, 1981). In addition, 女娲 (*nüwa*) was the most ancient Chinese goddess who patched the broken sky and held it from falling. Based on her mythology, Chairman Mao created the famous slogan to empower women: *women can hold up half of the sky* (Lee, 1994). Even in China's patriarchal history, when there were no qualified men leaders, there was a tradition for women leaders to lead the nation behind a bamboo curtain (*chui lian ting zheng*), such as the last national leader of Chinese imperial government Qing, Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) (Tan, 2008). In sharp contrast with foot-bounded women in the Song dynasty's (960–1279), women in Tang Dynasty (618–907) played football (*cuju*), which was the earliest form of football (FIFA, 2016). In addition to many women scholars and officials in Tang Dynasty, Wu Zetian was the empress in China during the year 624–705, who removed the bamboo curtain between her and her men followers and had many male concubines (Kwong, 2016). However, the power of many women in Tang Dynasty was disliked by men as *pin ji si chen* (the hen cackles in the morning), and women's foot-binding practice from Song Dynasty could be regarded as a backlash against the women's freedom in Tang Dynasty. Compared to the thousand-year-long foot-binding cloth, the *glass ceiling* in the modern world cannot shy Chinese women leaders away. Most modern Chinese women leaders do not know or feel the *glass ceiling* effect (Chao, 2011; Ha et al., 2018; Lee, 2017; Liu, 2013). Even though some have experienced the *glass ceiling*, they do not believe that the *glass ceiling* is too strong to be overcome. Chinese women leaders focus more on the strategies to win the support from men leaders and family members, such as working and communicating more actively, flexibly, and smartly with men and others, holding the organizational membership first and wait until children are grown up to take leadership positions (Chao, 2011; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Ha et al., 2018; Liu, 2013). In contrast with the inability to solve the *glass ceiling* and the emergence of more

metaphors about the barriers for women's empowerment (e.g., *sticky floors, concrete ceiling, concrete wall, bamboo ceiling, glass cage, labyrinth, glass cliff, imposter syndrome*), Chao's (2011) research showed that the *glass-ceiling* effects "have been broken bit by bit" (p. 760). And the failure of penetrating the *glass ceiling* to get development opportunities in men-dominated organizations actually pushed many Chinese women to become women entrepreneurs to start up their own business (Tan, 2008). Instead of tears and blames, many Chinese women leaders believe in their diligence and endurance as the way to cope with the gender discrimination and deep-rooted men dominated culture, which actually impressed and won the support from Chinese men leaders and others, who held original low expectations for women (Chao, 2011; Liu, 2013).

According to the *Hurun Richest Self-Made Women in the World 2020* report, Chinese women ranked number one with 61% of the world's self-made women billionaires with an average wealth of \$ 2.6 billion, and the U.S. and the U.K. ranked number two and three (Hurun, 2020). Although there are very few women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies and many women CEOs stepped down, two out of 37 women CEOs in Fortune 500 in 2020 are from Chinese culture: Lisa Su and Joey Wat (Hinchliffe, 2020). As Joey Wat claimed, crisis (*wei ji*) in Chinese language consists of two words: "danger" (*wei*) and "opportunity" (*ji*). The discriminations against women and marginalized minorities are also opportunities and sources for social and individual development (Crenshaw & Bonis, 2005). Although the gender inequity worsened during the last four decades in China, the wave of Chinese economic reform has also brought Chinese women much more opportunities than before. More and more Chinese women leaders have "penetrated the OLD Boy's club of the business world" and risen in China and the world as women leaders (Lee, 2017, p. xiv). Instead of using power to batter the *glass ceiling*, Chinese women leaders view women's leadership development as a journey of "climbing the Himalayas" (Chao, 2011, p. 760). In front of an uncertain and dangerous journey to the top of the Himalayas, an individual's perseverance, wisdom, hard work, and collaboration with others play a much more important role than gender differences. Despite the global pandemic, the Disney movie *Mulan* in 2020 reminded the globe of a Chinese woman, who lived about 1500 years ago. After fighting the enemies for her family and nation in a foreign world, *Mulan* not only received great recognition from her family and nation but everyone in the world until now (Edwards, 2010). Regardless of time and place,

the history of Chinese women is “not only a history of oppression and exploitation of race, class, and gender, but also one of triumph and success” (Ling, 1997, p. 109).

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND *WEN HUA* (文化)

After decades of feminist movements, many researchers realized that the societal culture, which shapes traditional gender roles, is the fundamental constraint for women’s empowerment (McLean & Beigi, 2016; Unterhalter, 2007). However, cultures “are extremely stable over time,” especially gender culture, which people have learned since the first day they were born (Hofstede, 2001, p. 34). The cultural constraints for women are often related to tradition, religion, and taboos, which are not only hard to change, but can be “too painful to be explicitly discussed” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 13; McLean & Beigi, 2016). After the UN’s four world conferences on women in 1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995 respectively, 25 years passed, the UN has not found a solution to deal with cultural constraints for women to organize the fifth world conference to lead women to progress in the twenty-first century (UN, n.d.). The contrast between women’s desire for gender equality and failure to batter the cultural constraints spurs women’s self-doubt and recrimination, which is supported by the backlash in a patriarchal world (Faludi, 1991). However, facing a rapidly changing world, many Western feminists admit that the world is too complex for feminism to provide “a universal knowledge” to fulfill the goal of gender equality; and feminism is just a way to critically engage in a complex world, “maintaining, or even exacerbating, conditions of inequity” (Calás & Smircich, 2006, p. 328).

Unlike Hofstede’s (2001, p. 454) “static view” of cultures, culture (*wen hua*) in Chinese language literally means using education, ethics, and communication (*wen*) to change (*hua*), instead of *wu hua* by fighting (*wu*) to change (*hua*) (Deng, 2017). Although women everywhere have to fight for self-actualization as the patriarchal world always puts women down, Western and Chinese women fight their good fights in a different way. If Western women leaders are like iron ladies with assertiveness and directness, Chinese women leaders are more like water ladies with softness, flexibility, and fortitude (Lee, 2017). Instead of a long skill list in modern leadership studies, the Chinese word, capability (*neng nai*) only includes two parts: competence (*neng*) and endurance (*nai*). The hard iron could be broken by harder cultural constraints. *Dripping water*

hollows out stone (di shui chuan shi) through persistence instead of force. Instead of pushing patriarchal culture to change to promote women leaders, Ha et al.'s (2018) used a Chinese idiom to describe Chinese women's leadership development: *The canal will be naturally formed with the flowing of the water (shui dao qu cheng)*.

IMPLICATIONS

The double portion of cultural constraints from Chinese traditional and modern cultures provide Chinese women with a double portion of wisdom and knowledge. Whether in traditional or modern China, Chinese women have contributed greatly to supporting the stability, development, and the next generation of the family and the nation. In a rapidly changing globalized world with all kinds of crises, the stability and peace of a family provide a secured foundation for the sustainable development of everyone and the nation. That is why the Chinese word, nation is *guo jia*, consisting of *guo* (nation) and *jia* (family). The *Chinese dream* could be more inclusive by promoting more Chinese women leaders on board to allow women's voices to be heard at the levels of both *guo* (nation) and *jia* (family). Therefore, the Chinese government should strengthen the enforcement of all the current comprehensive laws that attempt to promote gender equality. To empower Chinese women, the biggest women group in the world will also help the Chinese government realize the vision of building *a community of a shared future for humankind*, which was written into the PRC's Constitution in 2018 (Zhang, 2019b). The fulfillment of the gender equality promise in the Chinese constitution will not only encourage Chinese women to contribute more to the *guo jia* (nation + family), but build the credibility of the Chinese government among people from China and the globe, which will maintain and attract more talents to join the *Chinese dream*. Otherwise, China may have won the global trade war, but may lose both the global talent war and marriage war by losing the valuable Chinese women talents in both job and marriage markets (*pei le furen, you zhe bing*).

The double portion of cultural constraints from traditional China and modern Western culture provide Chinese women with both greater challenges and greater opportunities. Both androcentric Chinese and Western cultures have supportive and oppressive education for Chinese women. A Chinese woman should not internalize the oppressive education to make a

bigger foot-binding cloth to bind her mind from progressing, nor follow the misleading information to make great leaps as a woman tool to serve patriarchal and capitalist interests.

How a modern Chinese woman navigates her unique way to survive and succeed in a globalized patriarchal world in a sustainable and comprehensive way may benefit from learning how modern China established her own modern identity. From totally rejecting traditional Confucian culture and totally accepting Western liberal and capitalist culture or socialist culture, modern China learned how to incorporate the authentic and good parts and remove the false and fake parts (*qu wei cun zhen*) from all different cultures, and established a globalized modern China with Chinese characteristics (*zhong guo te se*). Zhang (1996) called the Chinese culture from the ancient to modern time as *Hehe* (和合) culture, which actively pursues the inclusion and harmony of different people. For thousands of years, the *Hehe* culture has been programming Chinese people's behaviors and mindsets to develop their lives both in a unified and unique way to pursue both the harmony with others and the progress of the self. The Chinese *Hehe* culture may be a living example of the transdisciplinary approach. After decades of feminist movements, Kitch (2007) claimed that the best way to achieve gender equality in a patriarchal world is through transdisciplinarity with the critical integration of different disciplines.

In the end, how Chinese women leaders overcome the double portion of cultural constraints from both traditional Chinese and modern Western patriarchal cultures may also inspire women in the world. Chinese women's relational wisdom from both a collectivist culture and female gender education may show women and any individuals a relational and interdependent approach to manage relationships with others at home, work, and in a shared globe to complement the current competitive and individualistic approach. At the end of the day, knowledge, self-identities, and leadership are not from and only for individuals regardless of genders, but are all contextual, relational, and socially-constructed for everyone (Uhl-Bien, 2011). Individuals are not held together as a family and a team by policies in black and white, but by relationships and emotions. The man-made modern world with all kinds of man-made crises in the twenty-first century probably need many 女娲 (*nüwa*) to patch the broken world to hold the sky from falling down.

REFERENCES

- Alter, C. (2015). *Gender inequality costs as much as the American and Chinese economies combined*. Time. <https://time.com/4045115/gender-inequality-economy/>
- Birdwhistell, J. (2012). *Mencius and masculinities: Dynamics of power, morality, and maternal thinking*. SUNY Press.
- Blake, C. (1994). Foot-Binding in Neo-Confucian China and the appropriation of female labor. *Signs*, 19(3), 676–712.
- Bloomberg News. (2019). *Being a Woman in China Means Working a Sixth of Your Life Unpaid*. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-01-25/being-a-woman-in-china-means-working-a-sixth-of-your-life-unpaid>
- Buszek, M. E. (1999). Waving not drowning: thinking about third wave feminism in the US. *MAKE: The Magazine of Women's Art*, 86, 38–40.
- Burden, L. (2020, December 25). China's economy set to overtake U.S. earlier due to Covid fallout. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-26/covid-fallout-means-china-to-overtake-u-s-economy-earlier>
- Cai, W., & Clement, S. (2016, Jan 27). *What Americans think about feminism today*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/feminism-project/poll/>
- Calás, M. B., & Smircich, L. (2006). 1.8 From the ‘woman’s point of view’ ten years later: Towards a feminist organization studies. In C. Stewart (Ed), *The Sage handbook of organization studies* (pp. 284–347). Sage.
- Catalyst. (2020). Women in the workforce – China: Quick take. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-china/>
- Chao, C. C. J. (2011). Climbing the Himalayas: A cross-cultural analysis of female leadership and glass ceiling effects in non-profit organizations. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731111183720>
- Chao, C. C., & Ha, L. (2019). *Asian Women Leadership: A Cross-national and Cross-sector Comparison*. Routledge.
- Cheung, F. M., & Halpern, D. F. (2010). Women at the top. *The American Psychologist*, 65(3), 182–193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017309>
- Chien, Y.(1994). Revisioning “new women”: Feminist readings of representative modern Chinese fiction. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 17(1), 33–45. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(94\)90005-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(94)90005-1)
- Chinese Text Project. (n.d.a). *Hanfeizi: shuonan*.<https://ctext.org/hanfeizi/shuo-nan/zh>
- Chinese Text Project. (n.d.b). *Analects: Wei Zheng* <https://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng>
- Clisby, S., & Enderstein, A. M. (2017). Caught between the orientalist–occidental polemic: Gender mainstreaming as feminist transformation or

- neocolonial subversion? *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 19(2), 231–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2016.1258262>
- Cook, R. (2001, March 26). *The Extreme of Typographic Complexity: Character Set Issues Relating to Computerization of The Eastern Han Chinese Lexicon—Shuowenjiezi*. [Conference presentation]. The 18th International Unicode Conference, Hong Kong, China. <http://www.unicode.org/iuc/iuc18/papers/b14.pdf>
- Cooke, F. L., & Xiao, M. (2021). Women entrepreneurship in China: Where are we now and where are we heading. *Human Resource Development International*, 24(1), 104–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1842983>
- Crenshaw, K., & Bonis, O. (2005). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Cahiers Du Genre*, 39(2), 51–82. <https://doi.org/10.3917/cdge.039.0051>
- Daxue Consulting. (2020, March. 24). *Plastic surgery in market China: How China became the world's second largest market*. Daxue Consulting. <https://daxueconsulting.com/plastic-surgery-market-in-china/>
- Deloitte. (2019). *Rising innovation in China. China innovation ecosystem development report 2019*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/cn/Documents/innovation/deloitte-cn-innovation-china-innovation-ecosystem-report-en-191101.pdf>
- Deng, Y. H. (2017). Wenhua yu wuhua ruhe de lishi yuanyuan jiqi bianqian guocheng yangjiu. [The research about the historical origin and evolution of Wenhua and Wuhua]. *Journal of Shenyang Sport University*, 36(5).
- Denyer, S., & Gowen, A. (2018, April 18). *Too many men*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/too-many-men/>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- Dickerson, Y. (2016). Chinese female graduate students on us campuses: Negotiating classroom silence, the leftover woman and the good woman discourses [Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University]. <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/426>
- Downing, N. E., & Roush, K. L. (1985). From passive acceptance to active commitment: A model of feminist identity development for women. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13(4), 695–709. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000085134013>
- Duan, Y. (1981). *Shuo wen ji zi ji zhu* [The explanation of Shuo Wen Jie Zi]. Shanghai Guji Publishing House. (Original work published ca. 2nd century).
- Eagly, A. (2005). Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 459–474. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.007>

- Edwards, L. (2010). Transformations of the woman warrior Hua Mulan: From defender of the family to servant of the state. *Nan Nü*, 12(2), 175–214. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852610X545840>
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge
- Faludi, S. (1991). *The undeclared war against American women*. Crown.
- Ferrando, F. (2013). Posthumanism, transhumanism, antihumanism, metahumanism, and new materialisms. *Existenz*, 8(2), 26–32.
- Ferrando, F. (2014). Is the post-human a post-woman? Cyborgs, robots, artificial intelligence and the futures of gender: A case study. *European Journal of Futures Research*, 2(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40309-014-0043-8>
- FIFA. (2016). *From the pitch to the canvas*. FIFA. <https://www.fifa.com/news/from-the-pitch-to-the-canvas-2847060#messi-by-fabian-perez-2847055>
- Fincher, L. H. (2014). *Leftover women: The resurgence of gender inequality in China*. Zedbooks.
- Forbes, M. (2014, July 3). *Pepsico CEO Indra Nooyi On why women can't have it all*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/moirafortbes/2014/07/03/power-woman-indra-nooyi-on-why-women-cant-have-it-all/?sh=7570158136bc>
- Fukuyama, F., & Zhang, W. (2011). The China model: A dialogue between Francis Fukuyama and Zhang Weiwei. *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 28(4), 40–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2011.01287.x>
- Fung, H. L. (2001). The making and melting of the “iron rice bowl” in China 1949 to 1995. *Social Policy & Administration*, 35(3), 258–273. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9515.00232>
- Gan, C. (2002). Kejuzhi De Shuailuo He Zhiduohua Rujia De Jieti. [The Decline of The Imperial Examination System and Disintegration of Institutionalized Confucianism]. *China Social Sciences*, 2, 107–117.
- Gan, N. & George, S. (2021, September 15). *An intern took on one of China's biggest TV stars in a landmark #MeToo case. She lost, but vowed to fight on*. CNN. <https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2021/09/15/china/xianzi-zhu-jun-sexual-harassment-case-mic-intlhnk/index.html>
- Gerstein, J. (2021, February 14). *Chinese couples are in panic over a new law requiring a new 30-day-cooling-off-period to divorce and are using scalpers to jump ahead in line*. Insider. <https://www.insider.com/chinese-couples-divorce-new-30-day-cooling-off-period-2021-2#:~:text=Chinese%20couples%20are%20in%20a,to%20jump%20ahead%20in%20line&text=A%20ghost.&text=Some%20couples%20are%20so%20desperate,Insider's%20homepage%20for%20more%20stories>
- GLOBE. (2020). *Cultural practices and values in the anglo group*. GLOBE. <https://globeproject.com/results/clusters/anglo?menu=cluster#list>

- Green, D., & Griffith, M. (2002). Globalization and its discontents. *International Affairs*, 78(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.00238>
- Gu, D. Y. (2016). *Chinese dreams? American dreams?: The lives of Chinese women scientists and engineers in the United States*. Springer.
- Ha, L., Bi, N. C., & Zhang, F. R. (2018). Leadership style and success experience of Chinese women academic leaders. *China Media Research*, 14(1), 1.
- Hao, J. & Zhou, D. (2007). *Cong Nvshen Dao Nvnu*. [From the Goddess to Slave Girl.]. *Social Sciences*, 31(5), 93–96.
- Haraway, D. (2006). A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late 20th century. In J. Weiss (Ed.), *The international handbook of virtual learning environments* (pp. 117–158). Springer.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2007). *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. SAGE Publications.
- Hesse-Biber, S., Leavy, P., Quinn, C. E., & Zoino, J. (2006). The mass marketing of disordered eating and eating disorders: The social psychology of women, thinness and culture. *Women's studies international forum*, 29(2), 208–224. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2006.03.007>
- Hinchliffe, E. (2020, September 16). The number of women running Fortune 500 companies hits an all-time record. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/women-ceos-fortune-500-2020/>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Sage publications.
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Hosking, D. M. (2011). Telling tales of relations: Appreciating relational constructionism. *Organization Studies*, 32(1), 47–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840610394296>
- Hua, W. (2013). *Buying beauty: Cosmetic surgery in China* (Vol. 1). Hong Kong University Press.
- Hurun. (2020, March 16). *Hurun richest self-made women in the world 2020*. Hurun. <https://www.hurun.net/en-US/Info/Detail?num=98A9114CEA08>
- Human Rights Watch. (2020, April 29). *China: Gender discrimination in hiring persists*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/29/china-gender-discrimination-hiring-persists>
- Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). (n.d.). *The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2019*. https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/employment-and-earnings/the-gender-wage-gap-by-occupation-2019/#_cdn2
- International Women's Day (IWD). *History of international women's day*. IWD. <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Activity/15586/The-history-of-IWD>

- Iwasaki, I., & Ma, X. (2020). Gender wage gap in China: A large meta-analysis. *Journal for Labour Market Research*, 54(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12651-020-00279-5>
- Kim, H. S. (2007). The politics of border crossings: Black, postcolonial, and transnational feminist perspectives. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 107–123). SAGE Publications.
- Kitch, S. L. (2007). Feminist interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge building. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 123–143). SAGE Publications.
- Klein, R. (1991). Passion and politics in women's studies in the nineties is out of the margins. In J. Aaron & S. Walby (Eds.), *Women's studies* (pp. 75–89). Falmer Press.
- Kopf, D. (2020, February). The ages that people get married around the world. *Quartz*. <https://qz.com/1800961/when-do-people-get-married-around-the-world/>
- Kuo, L. (2014, January 29). In China, highly educated women are mocked as a sexless “third gender”. *Quartz*. <https://qz.com/312464/in-china-highly-educated-women-are-mocked-as-a-sexless-third-gender/>
- Kuo, L. (2020, May. 29). *Anger in China at law ordering ‘cooling-off’ period before divorce*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/29/anger-in-china-at-law-ordering-cooling-off-period-before-divorce>
- Kupers, T. A. (2005). Toxic masculinity as a barrier to mental health treatment in prison. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 713–724.
- Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The singularity is near: When humans transcend biology*. Penguin.
- Kwong, L. W. (2016, December 15). *Empress Wu Zetian: An example of female power which remains relevant today*. SCMP. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/2054886/empress-wu-zetian-example-female-power-which-remains-relevant-today>
- Lee, L. (1994). *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women*. Wild Peony Pty Limited.
- Lee, P. J. (2017). *Chinese women business leaders: Seven principles of leadership* (Elsevier Asian studies series). Elsevier.
- Lee, W. (1995). Women's Education in Traditional and Modern China. *Women's History Review*, 4(3), 345–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092>
- Leggett, A. (2017). Online civic engagement and the anti-domestic violence movement in China: Shifting norms and influencing law. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 28(5), 2251–2277. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9680-9>
- Li, X. (2015). The death of Chinese female infants. *NEWS.163.COM*. <http://news.163.com/special/reviews/femaleinfantcide0831.html>

- Ling, H. (1997). A history of Chinese female students in the United States, 1880s–1990s. *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 81–109.
- Liu, S. (1993). *Blue sky green sea and other stories* (Renditions paperback). Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Liu, S. (2013). A few good women at the top: The China case. *Business Horizons*, 56(4), 483–490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2013.04.002>
- Lu, X. (1934). *Nan qiang bei diao ji*. Shanghai Tongwen Press.
- Lu, Y., Yang, X., & Yang, G. (2003). *Selected stories of Lu Hsun*. Wildside Press LLC.
- Martin-Matthews, A., Tong, C., Rosenthal, C., & McDonald, L. (2013). Ethno-cultural diversity in the experience of widowhood in later life: Chinese widows in Canada. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 27(4), 507–518. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2012.12.011>
- McLean, G. N., & Beigi, M. (2016). The importance of worldviews on women’s leadership to HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 260–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641419>
- Mejia, Z. (2018, May 21). *Just 24 female CEOs lead the companies on the 2018 Fortune 500—fewer than last year*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/21/2018s-fortune-500-companies-have-just-24-female-ceos.html>
- Milward, K., Mukhopadhyay, M., & Wong, F. F. (2015). Gender mainstreaming critiques: Signposts or dead ends? *IDS Bulletin*, 46(4), 75–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1759-5436.12160>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. (FMPRC, n.d.). *About China*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ljzg_665465/zgjk_665467/3576_665477/t17830.shtml
- Moser, C. (2005). Has gender mainstreaming failed? A comment on international development agency experiences in the South. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7(4), 576–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740500284573>
- Moon, L. (2018, January 11). *How the mainland went from ‘Made in China’ to ‘Created in China.’* South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/business/global-economy/article/2127847/how-mainland-went-made-china-created-china>
- Morrison, W. M. (2019). *China’s economic rise: history, trends, challenges, and implications for the United States*. Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf>
- Murray, A., & Meyer, D. (2020, August 10). *The Fortune Global 500 is now more Chinese than American*. Fortune. <https://fortune.com/2020/08/10/fortune-global-500-china-rise-ceo-daily/#:~:text=The%20big%20story%20is%20this,the%20global%20economy%20that%20represents>
- Ni, V. (2020, December 2). *China #MeToo: Court to hear landmark case of intern case versus TV star*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55140026>

- Nie, W. (2016). China's "new normal" Why investors are too pessimistic on the country's economic health. *IMD*. <https://www.imd.org/publications/articles/chinas-new-normal/>
- Qian, Y. (2017). Gender asymmetry in educational and income assortative marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(2), 318–336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12372>
- Qin, D., & Lykes, M. (2006). Reweaving a fragmented self: A grounded theory of self-understanding among Chinese women students in the United States of America. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(2), 177–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390600576087>
- Reinke, R. (2010). Catfight: A feminist analysis. *Chrestomathy: Annual Review of Undergraduate Research, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs, College of Charleston*, 9, 162–185.
- Roberts, H., Cows, J., Morley, J., Taddeo, M., Wang, V., & Floridi, L. (2021). The Chinese approach to artificial intelligence: An analysis of policy, ethics, and regulation. *AI & SOCIETY*, 36, 59–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-020-00992-2>
- Rosenlee, L. (2006). *Confucianism and women: A philosophical interpretation* (SUNY series in Chinese philosophy and culture). State University of New York Press.
- Seo, G., Huang, W., & Han, S. H. C. (2017). Conceptual review of underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions from a perspective of gendered social status in the workplace: Implication for HRD research and practice. *Human Resource Development Review*, 16(1), 35–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484317690063>
- Sheppard, L. D., & Aquino, K. (2014). Sisters at arms: A theory of female same-sex conflict and its problematization in organizations. *Journal of Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314539348>
- Sicular, T., Li, S., Yue, X., & Sato, H. (Eds.). (2020). *Changing trends in China's inequality: Evidence, analysis, and prospects*. Oxford University Press.
- Sina. (2014, July 25). *Zhongguo qiguanyan paihang bang*. *Shanghai diyi*. [Shanghai ranks first in China's ranking of cities with hen-pecked husbands]. Sina. <http://sh.sina.com.cn/news/g/2014-07-25/1545103398.html>
- Slaughter, A. (2012, July/Aug). *Why women still can't have it all*. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020>
- Song, J., Sicular, T., & Gustafsson, B. (2020). China's urban gender wage gap: A new direction? In T. Sicular, S. Li, X. Yue, & H. Sato (Eds.), *Changing trends in China's inequality* (pp. 321–358).
- Stacey, J. (1983). *Patriarchy and socialist revolution in China*. University of California Press.

- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). Women in leadership in China: Past, present, and future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. Mclean. (Eds.), *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tan, J. (2008). Breaking the “bamboo curtain” and the “glass ceiling”: The experience of women entrepreneurs in high-tech industries in an emerging market. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80(3), 547–564. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9454-9>
- Tang, C. S., Wong, D., & Cheung, F. M. (2002). Social construction of women as legitimate victims of violence in Chinese societies. *Violence against Women*, 8(8), 968–996. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780102400447096>
- Tang, Y. (2015). *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism*. Springer.
- Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries (Public planet books)*. Duke University Press.
- Textor, C. (2021, February 15). *Growth rate of real gross domestic product (GDP) in China from 2010 to 2020 with forecasts until 2025*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263616/gross-domestic-product-gdp-growth-rate-in-china/>
- Tiezzi, S. (2015, February 13). *Why 2020 is a make-or-break year for China? The deadline for China’s first “centenary goal” will test the political legitimacy of the CCP*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/02/why-2020-is-a-make-or-break-year-for-china/>
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2011). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. In P. Werhane & M. Painter-Morland (Eds.), *Leadership, gender, and organization* (pp. 75–108). Springer.
- Unterhalter, E. (2007). *Gender, schooling and global social justice*. Psychology Press.
- UN. (n.d.). *World Conferences on Women*. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>
- Vanham, P. (2018, April 12). Women in China contribute more to GDP than in the US. Viewing them as ‘leftover’ is problematic. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/women-in-china-contribute-more-to-gdp-than-in-the-us-viewing-them-as-leftover-is-problematic/>
- Wang, C. F. (2014). *Zhongguo Xingbie Lilun yu Nvxing Wenxue Piping*. [Chinese Gender Theory and Feminist Literary Criticism]. Beijing, China: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Weber, M. (1964). *The religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Macmillan.
- WEF (World Economic Forum). (2015). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2015*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2015.pdf
- WEF (World Economic Forum). (2021). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2021-report>
- Wei, N. (2016). *A study of employment discrimination against women in China from a comparative perspective* [Master’ thesis, University of

- Oslo]. https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/51396/8013_HUMR-5200.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- WHO (World Health Organization). (2021). Suicide rate estimates, age-standardized Estimates by country. <https://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.MHSUICIDEASDR?lang=en>
- Wilson, M. C. (2007). *Closing the leadership gap: Add women, change everything*. Penguin.
- World Bank. (2019). *China GDP*. The World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CN>
- Wu, A. X., & Dong, Y. (2019). What is made-in-China feminism (s)? Gender discontent and class friction in post-socialist China. *Critical Asian Studies*, 51(4), 471–492. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2019.1656538>
- Yan, K. (2017). *Chinese international students' stressors and coping strategies in the United States*. Springer Singapore.
- Yang, J. (2007). Zuiqian “deficient mouth”: Discourse, gender and domestic violence. *Gender and Language*, 1(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.2007.1.1.107>
- Yang, N., Chen, C. C., Choi, J., & Zou, Y. (2000). Sources of work-family conflict: A Sino-US comparison of the effects of work and family demands. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(1), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.5465/1556390>
- Yang, S. (2001). Language, women and cultural problems in China. *Women and Language*, 24(1), 24.
- Young, C. (1999). *Ceasefire! Why women and men must join forces to achieve true equality*. New York Times. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/y/young-ceasefire.html>
- Zeng, B. (2014). Women’s political participation in China: Improved or not? *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 15(1), 136–150.
- Zhang, L. W. (1996). *Hehe xue gailun: 21shiji wenhua zhanlue de gouxiang* [An introduction to Hehe Ontology: The conception of cultural strategy in the 21st century]. Capital Normal University Press.
- Zhang, P. (2019a, March 8). *Not girls, queens or goddesses: calls in China for a return to the real meaning of women’s day*. SCMP. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2189263/not-girls-queens-or-goddesses-calls-china-return-real-meaning>
- Zhang, H. (2019b). A community of shared future for mankind—The contemporary development of the social foundations theory of international law. *Social Sciences in China*, 40(1), 186–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2019.1556489>
- Zhang, J., Jia, S., Wiczorek, W. F., & Jiang, C. (2002). An overview of suicide research in China. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 6(2), 167–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811110208951174>

- Zhang, X. (2012). Minzu guojia, minzhu guojia yu wenming guojia—Liang Qichao dui xiandai zhongguo guojia xingcheng de gouxiang. [Nation state, democratic and civilized nations – the conception of modern China by Liang Qichao]. *Huawen Literature*, 1, 10–24.
- Zheng, Y. (2019, March 7). *Chinese women earn a fifth less than men and the gap is widening fast, survey by online recruiter Boss Zhipin finds*. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/business/china-business/article/2188933/chinese-women-earn-fifth-less-men-and-gap-widening-fast>
- Zhou, Z., Liu, Z., & Wang, Q. (2012). Can female directors enhance the value of private firms? Evidence from China's listed companies. *Frontiers of Business Research in China* 6 (4), 561–583. <https://doi.org/10.3868/s070-001-012-0026-5>
- Zhu, P. (2015). *Gender and subjectivities in early Twentieth-century Chinese literature and culture*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zurndorfer, H. (2018). *Confusing capitalism with Confucianism: Culture as impediment and/or stimulus to Chinese economic development*. Researchgate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325270473_Confusing_Capitalism_with_Confucianism_Culture_as_Impediment_AndOr_Stimulus_to_Chinese_Economic_Development
- Zweig, D., & Han, D. (2010). 'Sea turtles' or 'seaweed?' the employment of overseas returnees in China. In C. Kuptsch (Ed.), *The internationalization of labour markets* (pp. 89–104). ILO Publications.



Policies and Legislation

Jia Wang 

According to the latest national census data released in 2021, the male-to-female ratio of China's mainland population has hit a record low of 105.07 since the first census was conducted in 1953 (Xinhua, 2021c). With women accounting for nearly half (48.76%) of the total 1.41178 billion people today (Xinhua, 2021a), the need for achieving gender equality has become one of China's highest priorities (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2019). However, Chinese women's development has been a long and tortuous journey. The 5000 years of history of the country have witnessed a change of Chinese women's social status, from being more respected with higher status than men under a matriarchal clan system to becoming inferior to men with few or no rights in political, economic, social, and family domains under patriarchal feudalism. Despite efforts to liberate women, little progress has been achieved to raise women's status. This is largely due to the lasting

J. Wang (✉)
Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, USA
e-mail: jiawang@tamu.edu

impact of traditional cultural norms and feudal ideology that have defined women's social role as a housewife or homemaker.

According to the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2019), the founding of New China in 1949 ushered in a new era for Chinese women, changing their social status from being subordinates of men to being in charge of their own fate. Embracing late Chairman Mao's claim that *women hold up half the sky*, the Chinese government has made gender equality a national priority. Since the 1950s, the government has taken concrete actions to encourage women to participate in activities outside their home and promote their equal status within the family. Later on, the economic reforms and open-door policies initiated in 1978 have given women in China greater opportunities (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2019). In 1980, China was one of the first countries to ratify the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Recognizing the importance of women in building a harmonious society, China has made women's development an integral part of its economic development plan and gender equality a basic state policy. Additionally, the central government has engaged in a continuous process of constructing and strengthening China's political and legal systems to guarantee women's equal rights. Examples of government efforts include: (a) reinforcing the Communist Party of China's (CPC) guide for women's development; (b) creating and improving women's rights protection legislation by the National People's Congress (NPC); (c) establishing practical mechanisms to support women by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC); (d) setting up government working systems for implementation of national gender equality policies; and (e) enhancing the role of the Women's Federation as a bridge between the CPC, the government and the mass of women. Together, these measures provide political and legislative assurance for the comprehensive development of women in China.

In this chapter, I examine China's legislative and political environments and their impact on promoting women's development; I structured the chapter into five sections. In the first, I introduce major laws and regulations enacted by the Chinese government for protecting women's legal rights and interests. In the second, I identify various institutional support systems to ensure women's equal rights and development. In the next two sections, I unpack the legal and political implications for Chinese

women's development in terms of the progresses made and challenges ahead. I conclude the chapter with a recommended plan of action for lawmakers and organizational leaders.

LEGAL AND POLICY FOUNDATIONS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROTECTION

In China, national lawmaking is a collective effort between the National People's Congress (NPC) and the State Council (the Central People's Government), under the direct political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As China's highest state organ and the largest parliament in the world, the NPC and its standing committee (NPCSC) exercise state legislative power, such as amending the Constitution, supervising the enforcement of the Constitution, and enacting and amending basic laws. The NPC and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC, a political advisory body) meet annually to make important national-level political decisions. As China's highest executive organ, the State Council creates and executes plans for national economic and social development and presents most initiatives to the NPCSC for consideration after the endorsement by CCP's Politburo Standing Committee. Since the founding of the New China in 1949, a number of laws and regulations have been formulated and enacted by the State Council and NPC and its Standing Committee to provide legal grounds for gender equality in the political, social, cultural, and economic realms. Below are the legislations that are most influential to women's development in China.

The Constitution

The Constitution is the supreme law of China. Since its first enactment in 1954, the Constitution has been revised four times (1975, 1978, 1982, 2004). The 1954 Constitution specified that women should have the same rights as men in all spheres of life—politics, economy, culture, society, and family, that women should receive equal pay as men for equal work, and that women should be trained and selected as leaders. The first Constitution also made it clear that husband and wife both have the duty to practice family planning, and that violation of the freedom to marry and maltreatment of women are prohibited. These principles

remain unchanged in all subsequent revisions. With comprehensive guidelines, the Constitution laid the legal foundation for women's equality in China.

The Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests

Coming into force in 1992, this law is the first fundamental law in China formulated specifically for achieving gender equality. It sets forth, in detail, the legal rights and interests of women in politics, economics, culture, education, property, personal affairs, marriage, and family. Under this law, many discriminatory practices against women were specified and prohibited; for example, raising employment standards for women, refusing to hire women or forcing them to sign work contracts that restrict their right to marry or bear children, and discriminating against women in their equal access to promotion, benefits, property, and succession. The 1995 Amendment specified more responsibilities for governments at different levels to improve the protection system for women's equal rights. The 2005 Amendment officially established the legal status of gender equality as a basic state policy. This law, along with the Constitution, built the foundation of China's legal system.

The National Program for Women's Development

Between 1995 and 2020, the State Council issued three national programs (1995–2000, 2001–2010, and 2011–2020) to guide the development of Chinese women. This policy document was informed by China's Constitution, the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among others. Each program outlined specific objectives, strategies, and measures to develop women.

The 1995–2000 Program, with 11 objectives in eight action sectors (Angeloff & Leiber, 2012), laid a foundation for Chinese women's development in the twenty-first century. The 2001–2010 Program expanded the objectives into 34, and over 100 strategies and measures in six priority areas of development: women and the economy; women in decision-making and management; women's education; women and health; women and the law; and women and the environment. By 2010, most objectives set out in the 2001–2010 Program had been achieved

with significant progress made in all six developmental areas. Therefore, the period from 2001 to 2010 was considered one of the most outstanding historical periods of women's development in China (Women of China, 2015).

Built on the second Program, the 2011–2020 Program added social security for women and set two new goals: developing women's participation at all political levels (by fixing quotas) and increasing women's job opportunities (Angeloff & Lieber, 2012). In this program, a specific target was set, that is, women should account for at least 35% of highly skilled workers in China by 2020 (The State Council, 2011). Despite different objectives, all three national programs emphasized women's employment-related issues, including eliminating gender-based discrimination in employment, increasing women's labor force participation rate, and expanding fields of employment for women.

In addition to the general laws and regulations discussed above, there is specific legislation to promote gender equality in different domains (e.g., marriage and family) and for women of different age groups (e.g., baby girls, young girls, career women, and the elderly women). I discuss a few of them below.

The Marriage Law (1950)

Enacted in 1950, the Marriage Law is the first law established since the founding of New China. This law abolished discrimination and oppression against women in the feudal marriage system by legalizing a new system characterized by establishing a marriage system based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy, and on equality of husband and wife in marriage and the family. In 2001, the Marriage Law was revised with additional articles prohibiting domestic violence and bigamy, as well as supporting compensation for housework and divorce damages. Under the Marriage Law, women have more power in making marriage decisions; over time, the cases of early marriage among women have decreased.

The Law on Population and Family Planning (2001)

Implemented since 2002, this law stipulates that both husband and wife are responsible for family planning and emphasizes gender equality by forbidding fetus gender identification for non-medical purposes and terminating pregnancy due to a fetus' gender. With these stipulations,

this law aimed to reduce “son bias” (“an entrenched preference for sons over daughters,” Wang & Klugman, 2020, p. 49) in Chinese society. Also, to set forth guidelines to control the size of China’s population, this law specified family planning as a fundamental state policy and has been adopted as a means to raise the quality of the Chinese population. Additionally, family planning programs provided for legal remedies in case of violation of those rights, with women’s organizations playing a central role in providing legal aid. The Law was amended in 2005 when it introduced for the first time the prohibition of sexual harassment.

Among China’s family planning policies, the most restrictive was the one-child policy (OCP) because it limits each couple to one child. However, this restriction applied exclusively to the Han people—the only ethnic majority of China’s 56 ethnic groups. The strictness of the OCP was reflected by its enforcement. Before 1980, China’s family planning policies were mainly driven by political, social, and administrative forces. However, the OCP, formally conceived in 1979, was rapidly enforced by law across China in 1980 as a means to control China’s population size through fertility reduction (Jiang, 2020). Since the enforcement of the OCP, many scholars have examined its effect on fertility (Wang, 2012), sex ratio and gender selection (Huang et al., 2016), the sibling-less generation (Angrist et al., 2005; Rosenzweig & Zhang, 2009), education attainment (Jiang, 2020; Lee, 2012), as well as other family outcomes such as marital status (Zhang, 2017) and labor supply (Cao, 2019). While these studies generated mixed results, the OCP is considered “the biggest social movement that fundamentally changed the lives and family structure of the entire generation born in the 1960s” (Jiang, 2020, p. 544). On the positive side, this policy has led to women’s delayed entry into marriage and delayed parenthood, which gave women more time and opportunity to pursue education and participate in the labor market.

Legislation for Protecting Women’s Reproductive Rights

From 1949 to 1992, China issued a number of labor insurance regulations, policies of free medical services, and regulations on maternity leave for women employees. In 1994, China introduced the Trial Measures for Maternity Insurance for Enterprise Employees, marking the comprehensive implementation of the maternity insurance system for urban employees. The 2010 Social Insurance Law had a separate chapter for maternity insurance, turning departmental regulations into national laws

and providing a legal basis for safeguarding women's reproductive rights and interests. In 2012, the State Council promulgated Special Provisions on Labor Protection of Female Employees, extending paid maternity leave from 90 to 98 days. To further protect women's reproductive rights, China issued a guideline in 2019 to combine maternity insurance with basic medical insurance, providing more benefits to women employees (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

Legislation for Protecting Women's Equal Employment Rights

Multiple laws and regulations were formulated to protect women's rights in employment. Highlighted below are four of them.

The Labor Law (1994). Implemented on January 1, 1995, this law specified the following in Article 13:

Women shall enjoy equal rights as men in employment. Sex shall not be used as a pretext for excluding women from employment during recruitment of workers unless the types of work or posts for which workers are being recruited are not suitable for women according to State regulations. Nor shall the standards of recruitment be raised when it comes to women. (China Internet Information Center, n.d.)

Additionally, the Labor Law offered some special protection to women workers' rights under certain conditions, such as during pregnancy, maternity leaves, and harmful work environments (Chapter 7). The law further noted that employers in violation of relevant statutes would be held accountable by labor administrative departments for making corrections and compensation (Article 95).

The Employment Promotion Law (2007). Enacted by the NPC's Standing Committee in 2007, this law addressed gaps that existed in the 1994 Labor Law. Aiming to promote employment and coordination between economic development and job growth, this law was a further step toward achieving social harmony. According to Article 3, workers should enjoy equal employment and should not be discriminated against because of their gender. Article 27 stipulated women's rights to equal employment and prohibited employers from (a) rejecting women or raising employment standards for women based on their sex and (b)

setting marriage and childbirth restrictions on women workers in the labor contract.

The Employment Service and Employment Management Regulations (2008). Issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to complement the newly enacted Employment Promotion Law, this law gives more guidance concerning forbidden practices, such as conditioning women's employment on their marital status, or their pledge not to have children within a certain period, or using a hepatitis B status to screen candidates. It also introduced a fine for companies and organizations in violation of the law.

Notice on Further Regulating Recruitment and Promoting Women's Employment (2019). Issued in February 2019, by China's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, together with another eight national institutions (e.g., the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme People's Court), this Notice makes it clear that gender discrimination in the recruitment process was prohibited. Specifically, employers were prohibited from: (a) basing hiring on gender preference; (b) refusing/limiting women's employment opportunities; (c) raising recruitment standards for women; (d) inquiring into women's marital/childbirth status; (e) requiring pre-employment pregnancy tests; and (f) including childbearing restrictions as an employment condition. These new regulations allowed women to take legal action against employers in violation of this Notice. Also, employers or employment agencies that posted gender-discriminatory advertisements now faced stiffer penalties than previously imposed, criminal investigation, public exposure, and license revocation (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

Legislation for Protecting Women's Rights in the Family

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in November 2012, new breakthroughs have been made in China's legislation for the protection of women's rights in the family. For example, the 2011–2020 National Program for the Development of Chinese Women emphasized shared family responsibilities and work–family balance between men and women. The Anti-domestic Violence Law (2015) set up China's first legal infrastructure for prohibiting any form of domestic violence with four new elements in place: domestic violence warning, compulsory reporting, personal safety protection order, and emergent protection. Also, in 2015,

the Criminal Law Amendment (IX) included the act of “whoring with immature girls” (China Daily, 2019b) within the scope of rape—no longer considered as a separate and less serious offense—to protect young girls. In 2017, the General Principles of the Civil Law were promulgated, and the compilation of the Civil Code was initiated, focusing on further improving the marriage and family system by featuring gender equality. Also, in 2017, six government entities jointly issued the Opinions on Preventing and Resolving Marriage and Family Disputes to provide services to the public to resolve marriage and family disputes. In 2018, the Supreme People’s Court issued a judicial interpretation to address the problem of the identification standard of the joint debts of husband and wife. And, in 2019, to provide policy support for family parenting, the State Council issued the Guiding Opinions on Improving Care Services for Infants Under 3 Years Old.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT

In addition to strengthening its legal system, the Chinese government also set up, supports, or collaborates with a few national-level organizations to help promote the state policy of gender equality. Below are a few prominent examples.

National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW)

Originally known as the National Coordination Committee on Children and Women and renamed in 1993, NWCCW was established in 1990 by the Chinese government under the State Council as an institutional system to promote women’s development and protect women’s rights and interests. The basic functions of this Committee included: (a) coordinate and facilitate relevant government departments to carry out activities that aim to safeguard the rights and interests of women and children; (b) develop and implement the National Program for the Development of Women and Children; (c) provide human, material, and financial resources needed for work related to the development of women and children; and (d) guide and monitor the work of WCCW at the provincial, autonomous region, and municipal levels. By 2021, all governments above the county level in China had formed WCCWs, and a working platform had been built by NWCCW to coordinate and supervise the enforcement of the laws for women.

The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)

Founded in 1949 as a people's organization to unite and serve Chinese women of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life, ACWF had a goal to further women's emancipation and development. Led by the CPC, ACWF served as the primary mechanism for government engagement in the protection of women's rights. The highest power organ of Women's Federations is the National Women's Congress (NWC), and the ACWF's Executive Committee has been elected by NWC. ACWF has had a network of six levels—national, provincial/autonomous region and municipality, city, county/district, township/sub-district, and village/residential community. Its primary responsibilities included participating in drafting and revising laws related to women and providing support for women's equal rights.

Additionally, ACWF has played a leading role in motivating women to participate in China's economic and social development. Besides being part of the national effort in issuing five rounds of family education work plans since 1996, ACWF has launched several initiatives to develop women holistically. Examples include the Women's Action for Poverty Alleviation Project (2015), the Women's Action for Entrepreneurship and Innovation campaign (2015), the Women's Action for Rural Vitalization campaign (2018), and the Family Happiness, and Well-Being Campaign (2019) (Women of China, 2020). This wide range of endeavors has made women's federations one of the most dependable and helpful assistants to the CPC in promoting women's development.

China Women's University (CWU)

CWU, led by the All-China Women's Federation and guided by the Ministry of Education, was founded in 1949 as the New China Women's Vocational School. CWU went through a few name changes, responding to shifting societal needs, before adopting the CWU name in 1995. In 1996, CWU launched undergraduate programs and enrolled high school graduates for the first time. In 2002, the Ministry of Education approved CWU's transition to a regular institution of higher learning offering bachelor's degrees. In 2005, CWU successfully passed the academic level accreditation sponsored by the Ministry of Education. With a mission to become a national center for women's research and leadership training and international exchange on women's education, CWU has made a significant contribution to women's development in China.

Research Organizations

Besides women's universities, such as CWU, there are also governmental and non-governmental organizations devoted to research on women's issues. Examples include the first Institute of Women's Studies in China, founded by ACWF in 1983; the first non-governmental research organization—Center for Women's Studies—set up at Zhengzhou University in 1987; and the Chinese Scholars for Women's Studies (CSWS), founded in 1989. These research organizations have carried out extensive research projects and hosted a number of conferences dedicated to pressing issues facing women (e.g., education, employment, and liberation).

Developing Chinese Women: Progresses Made

China has honored its commitment to gender equality and women's development—made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, by making gender equality a basic state policy and by creating a more women-friendly legal and political environment. In this section, I highlighted China's achievements in political, economic, academic, and family domains.

Women's Political Participation

Generally speaking, Chinese women can participate in the management of state affairs through channels such as legislative institutions, governments at all levels, the CPPCC, women's federations, and trade unions. To promote women's political participation, the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee has made consistent efforts since 1988 by introducing legislation that favors women, reforming the personnel system, and establishing mechanisms for training and selecting women officials (Guo, 2013). The new laws and regulations serve as a legal and policy foundation to legalize women's equal rights to participate in decision-making and management. To guarantee women's representation in government work, a mandatory quota system has been enforced by law. Further, the need for training and selecting women officials has been reiterated in reports of every party congress since the 1990s (The State Council Information Office, 2019). As a result of these various government efforts, women in China have become more active in political life.

More Participation in Civil Service

During the past two decades or so, the total number of women officials in party and government departments has been on the rise, for example, from 422,000 in the early 1980s to 1.906 million in 2017, accounting for 26.5% of the total officials. Of the public servants newly recruited by the central government and their affiliates, women accounted for 52.4%, and their representation in local governments was 44% (The State Council Information Office, 2019). The rising trend continued in 2018, with women accounting for 27.2% of party members (16.7% higher than in 1956) and 22% of leadership in national public institutions (1.6% higher than in 2015).

More Participation in Legal Governance

Women's participation in both the NPC and CPPCC has reached a record high in China's legislative history. With 24.9% of all positions in China's single-house parliament held by women (742) among 2975 lawmakers elected in 2018 to serve for the next five years, the 13th session of the NPC marked the third consecutive expansion for congresswomen since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It also exceeded the world average of 24.5% as of January, 2019 and is significantly higher than the Asian average of 19.9% (Yang, 2019). This close to 1:4 gender ratio in the national legislature placed China 75th of 188 countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). Additionally, women accounted for 20.4% of members on the 13th session of the National Committee of the CPPCC, an increase of 2.6% from the previous session (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020), and 14.3% higher than the first CPPCC in 1949 (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

The number of women working in judicial bodies has also increased dramatically, constituting 32.6% of total court prosecutors in 2017, up by 23.6% from 1982 shortly after China's reforms and open-door policy were launched. Of all judges in 2017, 32.7% were female, 21.7% higher than the number in 1982 (The State Council Information Office, 2019). Meanwhile, women's organizations are making a greater impact on legal governance in China. For instance, in the past five years, women's federations have been active in enforcing and revising relevant laws and policies including Anti-Domestic Violence Law and measures in support of the Second Child Policy. They made recommendations on more than 80 national laws and policies as well as over 3000 local regulations and policies (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

More Participation in Business Management

Thanks in part to the 2011–2020 National Program for Women’s Development, more women have participated in business leadership. In 2018, women on the boards of directors of enterprises accounted for 39.9% and on the boards of supervisors of enterprises, 41.9%. These represent an increase of 7.2% and 6.7% from 2010, respectively (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020). In the Internet sector, more than a quarter of senior management positions in the Alibaba group are held by women (Wang & Klugman, 2020).

More Participation in Grassroots Administration

Since the 1980s, more Chinese women in both urban and rural areas have participated in the elections of neighborhood committees and village committees, thanks to the government for the establishment and development of the villagers’ autonomy system. In 2018, the proportion of women in neighborhood committees was 50.4%, an increase of 0.7% from 2017. Women’s representation in villagers’ committees was 11.1%, an increase of 0.4% from the previous year (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020). The role of women’s federations at all levels in grassroots governance has also been strengthened. Today, there are 7.7 million women executive members of women’s federations working at township and village levels (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

More Participation in Foreign Affairs

More women and women’s organizations have been actively involved in international affairs. Since 1982, Chinese representatives have been elected to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on nine occasions. Nearly 1000 Chinese women participated in UN peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, numerous women diplomats are active in the field of national diplomacy. As of October 2018, 33.1% of China’s diplomats were women, including 14 women ambassadors, 21 women consuls, and 326 women counselors above the division level (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

Women’s Economic Participation

Women’s economic participation can be measured by indicators such as the labor force participation rate, wage equality for same/similar work, and proportions in different sectors (World Economic Forum, 2020). China has certainly moved forward in each of these areas.

High Labor Force Participation

Since 1995, Chinese women's labor force participation rate has maintained above 60%: Li (2020) claimed that this ranked China as first in the world, though the World Economic Forum 2021 Gender Gap Report does not include China in the top 25 in the world. In 2018, 69% of Chinese women participated in the labor market (World Economic Forum, 2020), accounting for 43.7% of the total employed population in the country, exceeding the Chinese government's target of "maintaining above 40%" (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020).

Expanded Job Options

China's fast-growing private sector has opened new opportunities for women, from owning a small business to becoming a manager or executive in a large company. In 2018, women occupied 51.7% of professional and technical jobs in China. According to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2020), China ranked first among 153 countries in terms of the percentage of women in professional and technical jobs. In 2018, women entrepreneurs accounted for 55% of all entrepreneurs in the Internet sector (Li, 2020), thanks in part to the women's federation programs that provided women with the knowledge and skills needed for e-commerce (The State Council Information Office, 2019). Today, half of the businesses registered on TaoBao (China's Amazon) are women-owned (Wang & Klugman, 2020).

More Protection for Women's Right at Work

Through the years, the government has enacted a number of regulations to create a favorable condition for women to partake in socio-economic development. Examples include the Regulations Concerning the Labor Protection of Female Staff and Workers (1988), the Special Rules on the Labor Protection of Female Employees (2012), and the Manual of Guidance on Promoting Workplace Gender Equality. These efforts oblige employers nationwide to protect women's legitimate rights and special interests in the workplace. In 2017, 71.2% of enterprises provided labor protections for women workers, up 35.2% from 2002. By September 2017, a total of 1.366 million special collective contracts had been signed to protect women employees' rights, benefiting nearly 80 million women workers. Meanwhile, up to 300,000 trade unions in community-level enterprises and public institutions had set up resting and nursing lounges,

servicing over 18 million women (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

Poverty Reduced for Women

One of the key strategies adopted by the Chinese government to achieve gender equity is reducing and eradicating poverty among women in both urban and rural areas. Over the years, a number of poverty alleviation plans have been enacted, such as the Outline of Development-driven Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas (2001–2010) and (2011–2020), and Guidelines on the Three-Year Action Plan to Win the Battle Against Extreme Poverty (2018). When making poverty alleviation policies, the government has given priority to women. In addition, a number of public welfare and charity programs have been launched to help women in poverty-stricken counties combat poverty. Examples of the government initiatives include increasing the minimum subsistence allowance annually, providing skills training, free cervical and breast cancer checkups, small-sum guaranteed loans and micro-credit, health benefits, and daily necessities. As a result of the government's effort, living conditions of impoverished women have improved. According to a white paper issued by China's State Council Information Office in April 2021, among nearly 100 million Chinese who have been lifted out of poverty, women accounted for 50% (Xinhua, 2021a).

Women's Participation in Education

The right to education is an important means to realize the equal development of men and women. China has made remarkable progress in eliminating women's illiteracy by promoting equal access to education. All three National Programs for Chinese Women's Development put the improvement of women's literacy as a major goal and regard the eradication of illiteracy among rural women as a key issue. As a result, the illiteracy rate among women aged 15 and above dropped dramatically from 90% in 1949 to 7.5% in 2018 (Li, 2020; The State Council Information Office, 2019). At every educational level, women's participation has been on the rise. According to OECD (2019a), educational attainment in China is balanced between women and men at all levels, with nearly perfect gender equality for 25- to 34-year-olds. The gender distribution of teachers is also fairly even in China, where 58% of primary to upper secondary school teachers are women—comparable to other OECD and

partner countries, where the numbers range from 47% in India to 91% in the Russian Federation.

First, an increasing number of Chinese girls have received pre-primary education. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2020), in 2018, among all children who attended pre-primary education, 46.7% were girls, representing an increase of 1.3% (8.24 million girls) from 2010.

Second, the number of Chinese girls who receive primary education has been on a steady rise during the past decade, evidenced by 58.8% in 2011 to 89.2% in 2019. Since 2013, more girls than boys have participated in primary education each year. Using 2019 as an example, the gross enrollment ratio between girls and boys was 89.2% to 89.1% (UNESCO, n.d.).

Third, girls' participation in secondary education has also been on a steady rise from 52.3% in 2010 to 89.2% in 2019 (UNESCO, n.d.). In terms of senior secondary education specifically, the proportion of girls was also increased by 2.2% between 2010 (50.8%) and 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020).

Fourth, the most remarkable achievements occurred in China's higher education where gender equality has been reached in terms of overall participation. The 1998 Higher Education Law created conditions for more women to enjoy higher education by expanding the scale of higher education; promoting an educational loan system; and offering students grants and scholarships. As a result of these initiatives, Chinese women's participation in higher education more than doubled from 26.8% in 2011 to 59.5% in 2019 (UNESCO, n.d.). In 2018, the share of women undergraduate students reached 52.5%—32.7% higher than in 1949 when New China was founded (The State Council Information Office, 2019). In graduate education, 49.6% of students are women (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020)—specifically, women students account for 51.2% in master's programs and 40.4% in doctoral programs, representing significant improvements from 1995—up 20.6% and 24.9%, respectively (Li, 2020).

Lastly, the number of women receiving vocational education and continuing education has witnessed a marked increase, with the support of the Vocational Education Law (1996), the National Implementation Plan for Vocational Education Reform (2019), and the Special Implementation Plan for the Expansion of Enrollment by Higher Vocational Schools (2019). In 2017, women accounted for 42.9% of students in

secondary vocational schools, 58.8% in institutes for continuing education, and 47.3% in online higher continuing education (The State Council Information Office, 2019).

WOMEN'S ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES REMAINING

Despite the impressive progress the Chinese government has made in promoting women's all-round development, China's endeavors appear to be paradoxical. On one side is the belief that Chinese women hold up half of the sky, which has motivated the government to value and invest in women's development in society. On the other side is the culturally influenced perception that women are inferior to men and that they manage household work while men manage public affairs, leading to biased legislation by policymakers and discriminatory practices by organizations. These two competing ideologies simultaneously embraced by the Chinese people have impeded China from progressing rapidly in the global gender equality movement. According to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index that measures a country's overall achievement between 2006 and 2018 in four areas (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment), China's overall growth rate fell way below the world average, evidenced by its ranking of 106th of the 153 countries reported. Specifically, China ranked the 91st of 153 by the Economic Participation and Opportunity Subindex, 100th in Education Attainment, 153rd (the last) in Health and Survival, and 95th in Political Empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2020). These rankings indicate that China still has a long way to go to narrow and close the gender gap.

Another anomaly can be seen over time. In the early 1980s, when China was among the low-income countries in the world, its achievements in gender equality surpassed those in many middle-income countries (Wang & Klugman, 2020). During that time, women's labor force participation in China exceeded that in many developed countries (84% versus 61% in OECD), and the gender wage gap was much smaller (16–22%) compared to 36–38% in the United States, for example. There was also close to gender parity in the share of women and men holding professional jobs (4% versus 6%, respectively), and in completing high school (10% for women versus 11% for men) (Wang & Klugman, 2020). These successes are largely attributable to strong government commitments to

promoting gender equality and a wide range of strategies employed to raise women's economic and social status. Today, China has developed into an upper-middle-income country as a result of its economic and enterprise reforms. However, it has fallen below the world average in closing gender gaps (World Economic Forum, 2020). In fact, in several areas, Chinese women's reality has worsened rather than improved, such as declining women's labor force participation, widened gender pay gap, and widespread gender discrimination in employment. The cause for this differential can be traced to thousands of years of Chinese culture and traditions. For this reason, I begin this section by identifying some deeply rooted and persisting social-cultural norms against women.

Social-Cultural Norms Against Women

The Chinese government's efforts to promote gender equality through legislative development and political democracy-building have not put an end to the dominant culture and traditions influenced by thousands of years of feudalism. These long-endured cultural and social norms have created biases and stereotypes that make gender equality a difficult idea for the public to accept (Guo, 2013).

High Sex Rate Imbalance at Birth

Traditionally, Chinese families have preferred sons over daughters. This preference was aggravated by the one-child policy (for fertility reduction), leading to many couples' decision about aborting female fetuses or abandoning baby girls (Chen & He, 2020), ultimately causing an imbalanced sex ratio at birth in China—885 girls per 1000 boys (World Economic Forum, 2020). To address this unexpected social consequence, the Chinese government began to adjust the strict family planning policy, from 2013 to 2015, by introducing a revised one-child policy and a universal two-child policy. However, as the 2020 Global Gender Report (World Economic Forum, 2020) shows, the sex ratio at birth for China was the second lowest in 2006 of 112 countries and the lowest of 153 countries in 2018, suggesting that the sex imbalance at birth in China persisted, if not worsened. China's latest (2020) census confirmed that, among newborns, boys outnumbered girls (111.3–100); while this ratio indicates an improvement compared to ten years ago (118.1–100), it is still higher than normal (Wang & Wee, 2021). This persistent imbalance of sex ratio indicates deep-rooted gender discrimination in China (son

bias, Wang & Klugman, 2020), and will likely present more challenges to China in light of its fertility and aging crises.

Cultural–social norms define gendered division of labor. The traditional gender stereotype, such as men in charge of work outside the home, and women in charge of work inside the home (*nan zhu wai, nv zhu nei*), which defined women’s role as primary homemaker thousands of years ago, still dominates many Chinese people’s thinking today. The disproportionate burden of unpaid work on women in China has been identified through research. For example, Dong and An (2015) conducted a large-scale time-use survey to understand how much time men and women in both urban and rural settings spent on paid work, unpaid work (housework, childcare, and eldercare), and nonwork activities (e.g., self-care and leisure). Their findings revealed a gendered pattern of time allocation. Specifically, compared to men, in a given week, women work an average of five hours longer than men, and spent nearly 16 more hours on unpaid work (with the biggest gap in the average time use for housework—22 h for women and 8 h for men). In fact, two-thirds of women’s time per week was consumed by unpaid work, in contrast to only 20% of men’s. Consequently, it is not surprising that women have less time than men for paid work (an average of 11 h less) (Wang & Klugman, 2020). This finding is consistent with the global trend that women around the world carry out 76% of the total amount of unpaid care and domestic work, over three times more than men (Catalyst, 2020; OECD, 2019b).

Gender stereotypes lead to a negative public perception of women. Today, the general public in China still stereotypes women’s personas and judges them as homemakers rather than for their capability and educational achievements. Many Chinese people still refuse to recognize that women could be just as competent as men or even better in the same position, and highly educated women tend to be considered clever but incapable. Once women become authorities, the public may even disparage them (Qing, 2020).

Legal Obstacles

First and foremost, some legislation fails to address social–cultural norms against women. As shown above, gender discrimination, with deep cultural–social roots and detrimental effects, is one of the biggest obstacles to women’s development in China. However, surprisingly, current legislation has not paid adequate attention to this social phenomenon.

The Regulation on Labor Security Supervision (2004) does not explicitly include gender equality in employment in its regulatory scope, making it difficult for labor security inspection departments to track and monitor discriminatory behaviors against women in their employment (Women's UN Report Network, 2017). While China recently formulated anti-discrimination law, it does not include regional discrimination, which is common in some of the northern regions in China (e.g., Henan, Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning). With no legal protection, job applicants from these regions are screened out (The Economist, 2019). The Provisions on Cause of Action for Civil Cases do not contain gender discrimination in employment, leaving discriminated women with no way to file a lawsuit and demand redress.

Second, some legislation is gender-biased. For example, the National Provisional Regulations of Civil Servants (1993) specifies different national mandatory retirement ages for women (55) and men (60), without considering Chinese women's capability and longer average life expectancy than Chinese men. This reduces women's opportunities to contribute to social and national development and reflects a biased perception of women. Another example is the Care for Girls Campaign launched by the Chinese government in 2003 to address the imbalanced sex ratio at birth. Although this government initiative has noble goals—to eradicate gender discrimination from the prenatal stage and to raise the awareness of gender equality in early childhood (Angeloff & Lieber, 2012), the language used to develop a series of slogans and posters as part of the awareness-raising component of the Campaign sent conflicting or contradictory messages about son preference. For example, the slogan, *daughters also constitute the next generation*, while intending the son preference frame as a problem, implied that sons are the norm by using the word *also*. Another example is a poster with the slogan, *to care for girls is to show concern for the future of the people*. The poster portrayed pretty young girls of different minorities preparing to sing and dance, with eye-catching appearances—subtly emphasizing stereotypical traits such as being beautiful and pleasing. In addition, the Campaign promoted female traits by teaching girls to be more loving, caring, and emotionally closer to parents in their old age (Eklund, 2011). Therefore, in the short term, this Campaign might enhance girls' status by recognizing their inherent worth; however, in the long run, it reinforces damaging gender discrimination by not addressing Chinese cultural and economic deficiencies—the root cause for the imbalance in sex ratio at birth (Murphy, 2014).

Third, some legislation is ambiguous. This is particularly the case in women's political participation. While some laws and regulation stipulate the adoption of a mandatory quota system, they do not specify the exact number and proportion of women participants. For instance, the Women's Rights Protection Act requires only an appropriate number of women members to be included in the People's Congresses and government agencies at all levels. In 1990, the CCCPC and the National Women's Federation issued a joint notice, requiring that the problem of no women officials in county, town, and village governments should be solved within five years. In 2000, the CCCPC stipulated that within five years, all governments and parties of Chinese counties must have at least one female official and more women officials in party and government offices. Moreover, no laws, policies, or regulations provide clear penalties for the acts that encroach on stipulated women's political rights. Similarly, when it comes to recruiting women in the workplace, the Labor Law specified that women should not be excluded from employment during the recruiting process unless the types of work are not suitable for women. However, how to determine the suitability of a job for women is not clarified in the Labor Law. Due to a lack of clarity, legislation is likely subject to individual interpretation.

Fourth, some legislation is a double-edged sword. That is, what appears to be helpful on the surface but reflects poorly upon implementation. A good example is China's one-child policy (OCP) aiming to control population growth. To date, researchers have found a series of outcomes of this policy, some of which are positive and some are not. On the positive side, the OCP has led to delayed marriage and delayed parenthood (Goldin, 2006), both of which are found to be positively correlated with women's educational attainment (Jiang, 2020) and labor force participation (Huang, 2017). On the other hand, the OCP has led to an imbalanced sex ratio at birth due to the strong preference for boys (Wang & Klugman, 2020) and sibling-less families, each of which has unexpected social consequences. For example, researchers found a correlation between imbalanced sex ratio and increased crime (Edlund et al., 2013). Also, with 34.9 million more men than women in China in 2020 (Yip, 2021), gender imbalance is making it difficult for Chinese men to find a partner in the marriage market, especially for men with fewer socio-economic resources. Another side effect of the one-child policy is the singletons, also known as the loneliest generation. Without siblings, the

only child of the family will inevitably shoulder heavier domestic responsibilities of caring for their aging parents. Despite the Chinese government officially replacing the one-child policy with the two-child policy in 2016, China has not seen a baby boom as expected (Zhang, 2017). In fact, China's latest population census in 2020 recorded the lowest birth rate since the founding of New China 70 years ago, with parents citing the high cost of raising children, and the stress of ensuring their success in a super competitive education system as major reasons for this situation (Ni, 2021). This low child birthrate in China has led to calls for an end to birth control policies (Yip, 2021). In May 2021, Chinese authorities announced a reform to the family planning policy that allows couples to have three children. However, whether the new three-child policy will lead to a higher fertility rate largely depends on the government's ability to reduce the high cost of childbirth, rearing, and education, as well as address other social issues, such as persistent employer discrimination against working women who become pregnant or plan to become so (Global Times, 2021; Stevenson & Chen, 2019).

Another example is the government's extension of paid maternity leave from 90 to 98 days through the Special Provision on Labor Protection of Female Employees issued by China's State Council in 2012. In 2016, the amended Law on Population and Family Planning required all employers to offer female employees up to three months of additional material leave beyond 98 days (Feng, 2017). While this new regulation provides more protection for women who desire to have babies while working at the same time (Feng, 2020), it turned out to have a negative impact on both employers and women employees. Because the government does not subsidize paid maternity leave, employers in China tend to equate women's maternity leave from work to lost revenue—the longer the leave, the more financial loss. This may explain why many Chinese employers discriminate against women who consider getting pregnant during employment (Stevenson & Chen, 2019). As an unintended consequence, women's career and career prospects are compromised by the prolonged maternity leave (Feng, 2017).

Finally, on one hand, the Chinese government enacts labor laws to encourage women to seek work outside of the home; on the other hand, participating in the labor force has proved to be challenging for women with young children (especially those under two years of age) for a couple of reasons. First, as a result of China's enterprise reforms, many state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have relinquished their social service

responsibilities, such as childcare provision (Wang & Klugman, 2020). Second, affordable and convenient childcare options are limited (Ni, 2021). In fact, in a recent survey by China Youth Daily (2021) of nearly 2000 Chinese couples in their 20s or 30s, over 75% of respondents highlighted the urgent need for more accessible childcare services. This paradox leaves working mothers with three options: (a) seek their parents' help for childcare; (b) hire expensive nannies; and (c) quit their job to look after their children at home (Ni, 2021; Wang & Klugman, 2020).

Fifth, there are no effective enforcement mechanisms. Despite the intent to address inequalities, current legislation is not always enforced (Institute for Security & Development Policy, 2020); and, when it is, the implementation is effective or patchy (Angeloff & Lieber, 2012). For example, in 2019, China enacted laws and regulations to expand workplace protections for women, including provisions banning gender-based discrimination in hiring (Webster & Rosseau, 2019). However, these legal documents provide few specific enforcement mechanisms, leaving victims with inadequate avenues for redress (Li & Cai, 2011). In the cases where women did file complaints/lawsuits or pursue arbitration, local labor administration agencies did not always investigate their cases or impose penalties (Stevenson & Chen, 2019). The judicial system contributes to this issue by imposing only marginal financial punishments (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In addition, while it is illegal for Chinese companies to ask a woman about her marital status or family plans, many employers do so anyway (Feng, 2020). In a report on the current state of working Chinese women issued by one of the largest career consulting companies in China, BOSS Zhiping, among the childless women who responded to the survey with over 8600 career women of marriage and childbearing age, nearly 90% said they had been asked about their family planning during job interviews (SINA, 2020). This unlawful yet prevalent practice largely explained why 41% of unmarried women in the survey had chosen to delay marriage and motherhood (SINA, 2020) and an additional 35% were indecisive (SINA, 2020).

Political Obstacles

Since the founding of New China, the country has maintained its one-party management on the political level. The vast majority of Chinese party members are selected by their upstream authorities who are most likely men. As a result, women are often selected as political officials for

one reason only—to meet the required quota set by the central government (Guo, 2013). Additionally, a Chinese political tradition is to link managing the family to the governance of the state. The contemporary government has continued this tradition of viewing the family as the cell of society and believes that fostering a harmonious and productive family is crucial to maintaining good social order (Xie, 2017). Such a functionalist view of the family is evident in China's two recent initiatives—Looking for the Most Beautiful Family Campaign (2015) and the Family Happiness and Well-Being Campaign (2019). Both campaigns aimed to lift the family as a moral exemplar and to harmonize social conflict, which reflects deeply rooted Confucian ideology (e.g., filial piety and harmony). The government's growing emphasis on women's role within the family not only reinforced women's subordinate role as a homemaker but also contradicts its push for women's participation in work outside the home. This governing framework doubly impacts women in the context of a rapidly aging population. Well-educated single women are pressured to marry and reproduce because their success in marriage and reproduction is the target under China's biopolitics (Xie, 2017). On the other hand, the increasing emphasis on women's role in the family has exacerbated the dilemma for married women who attempt to fulfill multiple responsibilities as both income earners and caregivers (Cook & Dong, 2014).

Unintended Consequences

The combination of the social-cultural, legal, and political obstacles has led to some unintended consequences in China's push for women's all-round development.

Employment is Gender Discriminatory

Economic reform and opening-up have transformed China from one of the poorest countries to the second-largest economy in the world. Nevertheless, it has made a negative impact on gender equality in employment. This is because, when competition was introduced into the labor market as part of China's economic reform, it gave companies more latitude in a competitive economic environment to discriminate against certain groups in the workforce and in pay (Lee, 2020). When there is labor oversupply and recruiters have more choices, women are likely disadvantaged, especially for high-paying positions (Institute for Security & Development

Policy, 2020). The World Economic Forum ranked China 91st out of 153 countries in terms of the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity, below fellow emerging economies such as Brazil and Russia (Lee, 2020).

Gender discrimination is commonplace during interview processes. While it is illegal in China for employers to ask a woman job applicant about her marital status or family plan, nearly half of employers in China will take applicants' gender and marital status into account (Women's UN Report Network, 2017). About 54.7% of women job hunters are questioned about their marriage and childbearing plans during an interview. Some employers will immediately reject any application from women job seekers if they are hesitant about whether they plan to get married in the next two years (Women's UN Report Network, 2017), and some even force new women employees to sign agreements not to get pregnant (Stevenson & Chen, 2019).

Working Mothers are Disadvantaged

Influenced by the salient gender-based cultural norms, motherhood is found to be a career killer for working women in China and comes with serious career and financial consequences, known as *motherhood penalty* (Feng, 2020; Yu & Xie, 2018). According to Women's UN Report Network (2017), 67.4% of Chinese women surveyed confirmed that reproduction had reduced their chance for training or promotion in their work, and 47.4% blamed it for the deterioration of their work conditions. A recent survey with 2012 people (90% married and 62.7% having children) revealed that 86.1% of respondents noted that childbirth and rearing could impede a woman's career development, and 85% reported that they had observed working mothers struggle with work-life balance (China Daily, 2019a). Meanwhile, 67% indicated that government policies for protecting working women needed to be more practical, for example, allowing pregnant women to work from home.

These findings were supported by a more recent survey with a larger group—8629 Chinese women of marriage and childbearing age in the corporate world (SINA, 2020). Aiming to understand the state of working women in 2020, this study revealed similar alarming data. For example, 85% of the working mothers surveyed reported that motherhood significantly hindered their career advancement; over 30% of them admitted suffering a long period of mental distress before announcing their pregnancy at work, and 35% noted that their bosses started looking

for their replacements right after learning about their pregnancy. In addition, nearly half of the mothers surveyed left the labor force for at least one year after giving birth; among them, almost 21% ended up becoming stay-at-home moms for years. When asked about the impact of motherhood on their identities and life goals, nearly 35% of the mothers cited prioritizing family over work as the most profound change for them. This shift of focus was not always by choice, because, according to almost 40% of the working mothers in the survey, their husbands basically spent less time on parenting; more than half of the husbands did not use up their paternity leave, and 20% of husbands never took it at all (Feng, 2020).

To add to the challenge already facing Chinese career women, with childcare services being privatized and commercialized across the country, affordable childcare options become limited to parents with young children. In response to the increased financial burden, working mothers have two solutions: (a) make occupational choices that will allow them to assume the additional domestic responsibilities (Cook & Dong, 2014); or (b) opt-out of the labor market to take care of their young children at home (Guo, 2013). The gap between the government's policy and women's reality suggests a paradox—encouraging women to work yet offering few incentives for working mothers (Stevenson & Chen, 2019).

Gendered Pay Gap is Widening

Despite a number of laws and regulations enacted to promote equal pay for equal work, the gender gap in earnings has widened in recent decades in spite of greater gender parity in educational attainment in China (Tang & Scott, 2017; Zhang & Huang, 2020). As of 2019, Chinese women were paid 17% less than men colleagues for doing similar work (Institute for Security & Development Policy, 2020). Additionally, women with children earned about 20% less than single women (Jia & Dong, 2013), a phenomenon explained by Budig and England (2001) as the wage penalty for motherhood. In explaining why there was a rise in gender income inequality in urban China while the economy had experienced exciting growth, He and Wu (2017) stated:

Rapid marketization has altered labor queues and job queues in urban China and affected men and women's access to high-paying occupations differentially, leading to a higher level of occupational gender segregation in which men tend to fill jobs with better pay and women tend to be left with the lower paying ones. (p. 99)

Tang and Scott's (2017) research on career women in urban China supported the finding of increases in both gender discrimination and the gender earnings gap from 2002 to 2013. Specifically, they found that a large share of women was kept in low-paying occupations, a phenomenon they dubbed as the *sticky floor* effect. Additionally, women with young children (under 6 years old) suffered more wage penalty. Furthermore, the *glass ceiling* effect worsened, with women earning higher incomes facing greater gender discrimination. Finally, education and work experience, while still important, were not as rewarding for women over time as in 2002. In Yu and Xie (2018) study, women who assumed the responsibility of caring for the elderly in addition to their children suffered an even larger wage penalty. The researchers attributed the significant wage penalty experienced by working mothers (particularly those in nuclear families) to the extra family burden that required extra energy. As a result, as women's work productivity suffered, so did their wages. In addition to the wage gap between mothers and non-mothers in the workplace, research also revealed a rising earning ratio of single women to single men (Zhang & Hannum, 2015). Furthermore, the gender gap is more noticeable in private firms (27–30%) when compared to government and public institutions (15–17%) (He & Wu, 2017).

Women's Leadership Status is Still Low

As in many other countries, Chinese women are still facing serious challenges in reaching top leadership positions, in both political arena and business sectors. According to the World Economic Forum's (2020) Global Gender Gap Index, China ranked 125th out of the 153 countries studied in terms of women's representation as legislators, senior officials, and managers.

First, the growth rate of women's participation in national politics is low. While the overall number of Chinese women in politics has improved, the proportion of women politicians is substantially lower than their counterparts. The share of women in the NPC increased by less than 4% during a decade (from 21.3% in 2010 to 24.9% in 2020) (Statista, 2020). In geographic areas where we have seen record-high labor participation rates for women, such as the NPC and CPPCC, the gender ratio is still below 1:4. And with only 25% of politicians being women, they are significantly underrepresented. In terms of Party committees and governments at the city and county levels, women often serve as deputies rather than chiefs (Chen & He, 2020). Similar findings were revealed by the Global

Gender Gap Report 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020)—among the 153 countries included, China ranked 132nd in terms of the percentage of women in ministerial positions and 62nd in parliament.

Second, the representation of women in business leadership is still low. Chinese women are disproportionately placed in gendered roles, such as education and healthcare (Wei, 2011), or in low-paid occupations (Wang & Klugman, 2020). In the business world, women made up only 9.7% of board directors from listed companies in China in 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2020). In a survey of 401 enterprises, 20.1% reported having had a woman CEO in 2018 (Catalyst, 2020; International Labor Organization, 2019). Interestingly, however, women's participation on boards is higher for private companies than for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Wang & Klugman, 2020) where women rarely rise to top leadership positions. As Huang and Zhang (2020) showed, of more than 800 senior executives in all central nonfinancial SOEs under the jurisdiction of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), only 5% were women; none was the CEO, and more than half served in roles such as Chief Accountant and Head of Discipline Inspection (tasked with enforcing internal rules and regulations and combating corruption and malfeasance in the CCP), which are rarely paths to top leadership positions. Central state firms and financial institutions outside the jurisdiction of SASAC seem to have only slightly better gender diversity among senior executives, with women representing nearly 7% of senior executives (Huang & Zhang, 2020).

Women's Economic Participation is Declining

Although China has one of the world's highest labor force participation rates for women in the world (Catalyst, 2020), the rate has been steadily declining during the past three decades, from 73.2% in 1990 to 70% in 2018, to 59.8% in 2020 (The World Bank, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020). Many factors have contributed to this decline and below I discuss three. One is the government's relaxation of family planning in an attempt to reverse China's falling birth rates. With the government's introduction of the two-child policy and, most recently, the three-child policy, Chinese women, particularly working women, will face more challenges caused by increased childcare responsibility; thus, they are likely to struggle more to balance work and larger family demands (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2021; Wang & Klugman, 2020).

Another factor is China's economic reform. On the one hand, it has transformed China into the second most powerful economy in the world; on the other hand, it has resulted in many unexpected setbacks for women. A major setback is manifested during the hiring process. With the loosening of state control over the marketplace, employers nowadays have more latitude in a competitive labor market to choose whom they want to hire and how much they are willing to pay; unfortunately, women are often the ones who are discriminated against, which reduces their employment opportunities. Meanwhile, with many state-owned enterprises being transformed into other types of ownership as part of China's reforms, state-funded childcare facilities have declined, putting more childcare pressure on working mothers with young children and women of childbearing age who also seek employment (Jia & Dong, 2013).

The third factor is the government's extension of maternity leave. While this policy change benefits working women, it does not benefit employers who now have to pay for longer maternity leave without government support. As a result, employers are reluctant to hire women of childbearing age.

Therefore, taken together, increased family size, diminished employment opportunities, more prevalent gender-biased hiring practices, and reduced affordable childcare support, have forced Chinese women either to delay their economic participation or opt out of the workforce (Connelly et al., 2018; Ni, 2021; Zhang & Huang, 2020).

Women's Development is Unbalanced by Region

The level of rural women's political participation is still low. In 2018, women accounted for 24% of villagers' committee membership; while this reflects the highest rate since 2010 (21.4%), it is far from China's 2011–2020 National Program for Women's Development target of over 30% by 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020).

Another area where unbalanced development exists is education attainment where gender inequality varies by area (rural versus urban) and grade level. Zeng et al. (2014) found that girls in rural areas faced the greatest obstacles to enrollment in schools, while there is no significant gender inequality for urban girls or during the nine years of compulsory education.

Regional development gaps exist in women's health. Although maternal health has improved in China during the past three decades,

evidenced by the significantly decreased maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in 2020 (16.9 per 100,000, Xinhua, 2021b), compared to 88.9 per 100,000 in 1990 (Chen et al., 2021), there are still regional differences. For example, the national MMR in 2019 was 17.8 per 100,000 (Chen et al., 2021). However, in rural China, MMR was 18.6 per 100,000 (above the national average), compared to 16.5 per 100,000 in urban areas (below national average); the MMR in the western region (25.2 per 100,000) in 2018 was much higher than the national average (18.3 per 100,000), and even more so when compared to the eastern region (10.9 per 100,000) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020). These regional differences can be attributed to a variety of factors: income gaps (Chen et al., 2021), economic development status, individual health awareness, educational background (Zhou et al, 2019), access to reproductive health services, and social inequality (Zhang & Rahman, 2020).

GOING FORWARD: A RECOMMENDED PLAN OF ACTION

In light of the challenges above, I offer the following recommendations for China's legislators, party officials, organizational leaders, and other implementers of laws and regulations relevant to women.

Evaluate and Revise Existing Legislation

Given the various flaws discussed above, Chinese policymakers and legislators must first critically evaluate existing laws and regulations to abolish or substantially revise those that discriminate against women in employment. Meanwhile, there is a need to assess the impact of current legislation, particularly the unexpected social consequences for women. Burnett noted a chain effect of some legislations in China:

Laws and regulations that are meant to protect women require employers to provide female employees with expensive benefits related to maternity, child care, and basic gender differences (whether biological or merely perceived), making female employees much more expensive to employers than male employees. These regulations force women to retire at an earlier age than men, and this leaves them with lower pensions even when men's and women's benefits are supposedly the same. (p. 298)

The above requires China's policymakers to take a holistic approach to policy formation and identify all contextual variables that may influence the outcomes of law enforcement. Without taking all key factors into consideration, legislation, no matter how much it favors women, will not reduce the suffering of women in China from the unintended impact like the one identified.

Enact a Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law

This task needs to be placed at the top of China's legislative agenda. Currently, China's anti-discrimination legislation is scattered among different laws and regulations, which causes confusion (Institute for Security & Development Policy, 2020). Further, in existing regulations, there is no clear definition of what constitutes discrimination, making it difficult to identify discriminatory behaviors or practices. Specifically, there is a need to develop anti-discrimination in employment law with a specific focus on women's employment. There is also a need to amend the Law on Promotion of Employment and the Regulation on Labor Security Supervision to reduce discrimination against women in employment in their regulatory scope. In this amendment, it will be necessary to define gender-based practices, specify assessment standards, establish meaningful penalties in the case of violations, and outline a cause of action for legal remedy. Finally, China's anti-discrimination laws lack enforcement mechanisms. Consequently, many discriminatory practices that are supposed to be prohibited by national and local legislation are still ongoing. It would be helpful to add gender discrimination to the Provisions on Cause of Action for Civil Cases so that discriminated women have a channel to file a lawsuit and demand redress. Meanwhile, it would help to set up an inspection system to ensure that employers comply with anti-discrimination provisions in relevant employment laws and regulations.

Launch an Anti-Gender Discrimination Movement

In addition to amending and developing laws and regulations to eliminate gender-based public perceptions and organizational practices against women, other non-legal actions can also be taken. One is to launch an anti-gender discrimination movement nationwide to educate the general public on the forms and impact of gender-based biases and discrimination and incorporate such education in formal school curricula and

workplace training. Doing so will elevate Chinese people's awareness of the detrimental impact of these historically deep-rooted, yet largely overlooked social and cultural norms. It will also help them to identify their own gender-based stereotypes and blind spots. This will particularly benefit decision-makers at all levels (e.g., legislators, organizational leaders, managers, supervisors) because they are in a position to advance or impede women's development.

Another action is to organize events to discuss women's developmental issues. These events can be in different formats (conferences, special forums, and formal/informal dialogue sessions) and on different levels (national, regional, institutional, and family). These events will provide opportunities for women to share their stories, voice their needs, and make recommendations. For men who have no knowledge or experience of the unique challenges facing their women counterparts, these events can be transformational.

Strengthen Laws and Judicial Enforcement

As Chinese lawmakers have recognized, China's legal and institutional apparatuses were not prepared to handle many practical and social consequences, such as declining population and imbalanced sex ratio caused by the One-Child Policy, as well as biased employment practices and widening gender pay gaps caused by lasting stereotypes and discrimination against women. This partially explains why the outcomes did not always meet the government's expectations, even though a number of new laws and regulations (e.g., two-child policy and Anti-discrimination Legislation) were enacted to rectify emerging issues (Institute for Security & Development Policy, 2020). Going forward, the Chinese government needs to use more caution before issuing a new policy or regulation, by anticipating the unintended consequences and developing an action plan. Additionally, immediate efforts need to be made to establish a comprehensive system to track and monitor the enforcement of laws and regulations, such as improving existing complaint mechanisms, strengthening supervisory work, providing consultation services, and providing suggestion boxes and hotlines for the general public. Furthermore, the government needs to establish a much stronger accountability system for enforcement; in the case of violation by employers, serious penalties must be applied. Finally, the Supreme People's Court should improve litigation

mechanisms and list gender discrimination in employment as an independent cause of action in the Provisions on Cause of Action for Civil Cases.

Support Women for Work–Family Balance

Supporting women for work–family balance will boost women’s participation in the labor market and reduce their increasing burden at home. Here are a few examples of action steps to consider: (a) incentivize working women to stay in the labor market through equal pay; (b) provide women with flexible work schedules, including the option of working from home; (c) provide public and workplace childcare services at an affordable rate (if not at no cost) and allow for the admission of children under two into public nurseries; (d) subsidize women employees who are also primary caregivers at home; (e) compensate women for unpaid work at home; (f) offer free counseling services to women in need; and (g) provide free training to equip women with strategies for work–life balance, stress management, and self-care. It is worth noting that many of these strategies can also be applied to men employees who are husbands and/or fathers and who are willing to be the primary caregivers at home. In fact, the above incentives may encourage men to take more domestic responsibilities, freeing their wives to engage more in work outside their home. Additionally, the government needs to accelerate the pace of the socialization of housework, because doing so will not only provide working opportunities for women who are not competitive in the workforce but also allow women more time to participate in political and socio-economic activities.

Closing Gender Gaps Through the Accelerator Model

On a global scale, World Economic Forum (2020) recommended a solution for closing gender gaps—the accelerator model, which can be a useful reference tool for China going forward. This model aims to strengthen existing efforts by bringing together relevant stakeholders onto one platform. Each accelerator is a national public–private collaboration platform to help governments and businesses identify, scale, and accelerate initiatives to close gender gaps. The accelerators drive change by working on initiatives in three areas: (a) changing institutional structures and policies; (b) working on norms and attitudes; and (c) building public and private

sector leaders' collective commitment. Specifically, the World Economic Forum urges countries to develop a country-specific action plan to achieve the following four objectives: (a) increase women labor force participation broadly and in selected sectors; (b) increase the number of women in leadership positions; (c) close gaps in wages and remuneration; and (d) build parity in emerging high-demand skills and jobs.

CONCLUSION

China's decades of efforts toward creating gender equality and promoting women's all-round development have led to some fruitful outcomes; however, the overall trends present a mixed picture. The closed gender gap in education and the significant representation of women in professional and technical jobs are just a couple of many examples that symbolize China's remarkable progress. On the other hand, falling labor force participation among women of childbearing age and a widening gender pay gap suggest some reversals of the country's earlier achievements. On the whole, the status of Chinese women remains inferior to that of men, particularly in public life, and their roles within the family and society remain gendered. Additionally, the slower improvement China has made, compared with many other countries (particularly those at a similar developmental stage), further indicates that the country still has a long way to go. As this chapter shows, to succeed in promoting women's development in China requires more than good intention, firm commitment, and solid legislation; it also requires supportive political and social infrastructures, effective law enforcement mechanisms, and regular reality checks. Finally, it requires all members of Chinese society to make a concerted effort to identify and combat a lasting impact of the deep-rooted, yet often taken-for-granted, cultural values, social norms, patriarchy, and power dynamics. Doing so will accelerate China's progress toward its vision of building social harmony.

REFERENCES

- Angeloff, T., & Leiber, M. (2012, April). Equality, did you say? Chinese feminism after 30 years of reforms. *China Perspectives*, 4, 17–24.
- Angrist, J. D., Lavy, V., & Schlosser, A. (2005). *New evidence on the causal link between the quantity and quality of children*. National Bureau of Economic

- Research Working Paper Series, No. 11835. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w11835/w11835.pdf
- Bloomberg Businessweek. (2021, July 15). *China's three-child policy puts more pressure on working women*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-15/gender-discrimination-china-s-three-child-policy-hurts-working-women>
- Budig, M. J., & England, P. (2001). The wage penalty for motherhood. *American Sociological Review*, 66(2), 204–225.
- Cao, Y. (2019). Fertility and labor supply: Evidence from the one-child policy in China. *Applied Economics*, 51(9), 889–910.
- Catalyst. (2020, April 14). *Women in the workforce—China: Quick take*. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-china/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20women%20made%20up,from%20listed%20companies%20in%20China.&text=In%20a%20survey%20of%20401,a%20woman%20CEO%20in%202018>
- Chen, B., & He, H. (2020). Falling behind the rest? China and the gender gap index. *Social Inclusion*, 8(2), 10–22.
- China Daily. (2019a, July 14). *85% people say work-life balance difficult for working mothers*. <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/2019a07/14/WS5d2adab3a3105895c2e7d521.html>
- China Daily. (2019b, September 21). Equality, development and sharing: Progress of women's cause in 70 years since New China's founding. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/2019b09/21/WS5d858bf0a310cf3e3556cbb2_3.html
- China Internet Information Center. (n.d.). *Labor law of the People's Republic of China*. http://www.china.org.cn/living_in_china/abc/2009-07/15/content_18140508.htm
- China Youth Daily. (2021, March 10). 75.2% 受访八零九零后期待大力发展0–3岁托育服务 [75.2% of the respondents born after 80s and 90s expect great development of childcare services for 0–3 years old]. <https://finance.sina.com.cn/review/jcgc/2021-03-11/doc-ikknsci0651935.shtml>
- Chen, L., Feng, P., Shaver, L., & Wang, Z. (2021). Maternal mortality ratio in China from 1990 to 2019: Trends, causes and correlations. *BMC Public Health*, 21, 1536. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11557-3>
- Connelly, R., Dong, X., Jacobsen, J., & Zhao, Y. (2018). The care economy in post-reform China: Feminist research on unpaid and paid work and well-being. *Feminist Economics*, 24(2), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2018.1441534>
- Cook, S., & Dong, X. Y. (2014). Harsh choices: Chinese women's paid work and unpaid care responsibilities under economic reform. *Development and Change*, 42(4), 947–965.

- Dong, X., & An, X. (2015). Gender patterns and value of unpaid care work: Findings from China's first large-scale time use survey. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 61(3), 540–560. <https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12119>
- Eklund, L. (2011). Good citizens prefer daughters: Gender, rurality and the Care for Girls Campaign. In T. Jacka & S. Sargeson (Eds.), *Women, gender and rural development in China* (pp. 24–142). Edward Elgar.
- Edlund, L., Li, H., Yi, J., & Zhang, J. (2013). Sex ratios and crime: Evidence from China. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 95(5), 1520–1534.
- Feng, J. (2017, July 10). *Will longer maternity leave harm women's career prospects in China?—China's latest society and culture news*. <https://supchina.com/2017/07/10/will-longer-maternity-leave-harm-womens-career-prospe-cts-china-chinas-latest-society-culture-news/>
- Feng, J. (2020, November 16). *Motherhood is still a career killer for Chinese women, new research finds*. <https://supchina.com/2020/11/16/motherhood-is-still-a-career-killer-for-chinese-women-new-research-finds/>
- Global Times (2021, July 27). *China will amend the population and family planning law and improve supporting measures for the third-child policy*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202107/1229812.shtml>
- Goldin, C. (2006). The quiet revolution that transformed women's employment, education, and family. *The American Economic Review*, 96(2), 1–21.
- Guo, X. (2013). *Women's political participation in China*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. Wake Forest University.
- He, G. Y., & Wu, X. G. (2017). Marketization, occupational segregation, and gender earnings inequality in urban China. *Social Science Research*, 65, 96–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.12.001>
- Huang, T., & Zhang, E. Y. (2020). Chinese SOEs need more female leaders. *Peterson Institute for International Economics*. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/china-economic-watch/chinese-soes-need-more-female-leaders>
- Huang, W. (2017, September). How does the one child policy impact social and economic outcomes? *IZA World of Labor*, 387. <https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.387>
- Huang, W., Lei, X., & Zhao, Y. (2016). One-child policy and the rise of man-made twins. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 98(3), 467–476.
- Human Rights Watch. (2018). *“Only men need apply”: Gender discrimination in job advertisements in China*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/04/23/only-men-need>
- International Labor Organization. (2019). *The business case for change: Country snapshots*. https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/WCMS_702188/lang-en/index.htm
- Institute for Security & Development Policy. (2020, September). *Taking stock of China's anti-discrimination legislation*. <https://isdp.eu/content/uploads/2020/09/Chinas-Anti-Discrimination-Legislation-BG-FINAL.pdf>

- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (March, 2020). “Percentage of Women in national Parliaments,” *New Parline: The IPU’s Open Data Platform*. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=3&year=2020>
- Jia, N., & Dong, X. Y. (2013). Economic transition and the motherhood wage penalty in urban China: Investigation using panel data. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 37(4), 819–843. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bes044>
- Jiang, X. (2020). Family planning and women’s educational attainment: Evidence from the one-child policy. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 38(3), 530–545. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12462>
- Lee, M.-H. (2012). The one-child policy and gender equality in education in China: Evidence from household data. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 33(1), 41–52.
- Lee, Y. N. (2020, June 22). *Women in China are losing out in the workforce—that’s bad news for the economy*. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/23/china-women-are-losing-out-in-the-workforce-its-harmful-for-the-economy.html>
- Li, W. (2020, October 2). *25 years of gender equality in China*. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-10-02/25-years-of-gender-equality-in-China-Uf3mIZovWE/index.html>
- Li, W. P., & Cai, F. (2011). Legal thinking on eliminating gender discrimination in employment. *Theoretical Exploration*, 1, 135–137. <https://wenku.baidu.com/view/a9f46b82d4d8d15abe234efd.html>
- Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People’s Republic of China. (2019, February 21). *Notice of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Education and other nine departments on the further regulation of recruitment practices to promote women’s employment*. http://www.mohrss.gov.cn/SYrlzyhshbzb/jiuyezcwj/201902/t20190221_310707.html
- Murphy, R. (2014). Sex ratio imbalances and China’s Care for Girls Programme: A case study of a social problem. *The China Quarterly*, 219, 781–807. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741014000691>
- National Bureau of Statistics of China. (2020, January 3). *2018 statistical monitoring report on the implementation of China National Program for Women’s Development (2011–2020)*. http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202001/t20200103_1721237.html#:~:text=The%2013th%20session%20of%20the%20National%20Committee%20of%20the%20CPPCC,higher%20han%20the%20previous%20session.
- Ni, D. (2021, March 18). China hopes more day care will reduce cost of having kids. *Sixth Tone*. <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1006955/china-hopes-more-day-care-will-reduce-cost-of-having-kids>
- OECD. (2019a). *Education at a glance 2019a. People’s Republic of China (China)*. https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_CHN.pdf

- OECD. (2019b). *Enabling women's economic empowerment: New approaches to unpaid care work in developing countries*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/ec90d1b1-cn>
- Qing, S. (2020). Gender role attitudes and male-female income differences in China. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, 7(12). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-020-00123-w>
- Rosenzweig, M. R., & Zhang, J. (2009). Do population control policies induce more human capital investment? Twins, birth weight and China's "one-child" policy. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 76(3), 1149–1174.
- SINA. (2020, November 16). 报告称近九成受调研已婚女性求职被问过生育计划 [The report says that nearly 90% of the surveyed married women have been asked about their birth plan when applying for a job]. <https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2020-11-16/doc-iiznctke1742029.shtml>
- Statista. (2020). *Share of women in Chinese national parliament from 2010 to 2020*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/239113/sshare-of-women-in-chinese-national-parliament/>
- Stevenson, A., & Chen, E. (2019, November 1). In China, working mothers say they are fired or sideline. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/01/business/china-mothers-discrimination-working-.html>
- Tang, Y., & Scott, R. (2017). "Glass ceiling" or "sticky floor": the evidence from Chinese labor market. *Advances in Economics and Businesses*, 5(10), 31–538. <https://doi.org/10.13189/aeb.2017.051001>
- The Economist. (2019, April 13). *Many Chinese suffer discrimination based on their regional origin*. <https://www.economist.com/china/2019/04/11/many-chinese-suffer-discrimination-based-on-their-regional-origin>
- The State Council Information Office. (2019, September 20). *Equality, development and sharing: Progress of women's cause in 70 years since New China's founding* [White Paper]. The People's Republic of China. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1664976/1664976.htm>
- The World Bank. (2020, September 20). *Labor force participation rate, female (% of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate)-China*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=CN>
- UNESCO. (n.d.). *China: Education and literacy*. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/cn?theme=education-and-literacy>
- Wang, F. (2012). *Family planning policy in China: Measurement and impact on fertility*. Munich Personal RePEc Archive, No. 42226. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/42226>
- Wang, L., & Klugman, J. (2020). How women have fare in the labour market with China's rise as a global economic power. *Asia Pacific Policy Studies*, 7, 43–64.

- Wang, V., & Wee, S. L. (2021, May 11). Key takeaways from China's census results. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/11/world/asia/china-census-population-one-child-policy.html>
- Webster, F., & Rosseau, S. (2019, March 15). *China strengthens gender equality*. Mercer. <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/law-and-policy-group/china-strengthens-gender-equality.html>
- Wei, G. (2011). Gender comparison of employment and career development in China. *Asian Women*, 27(1), 95–113.
- Women of China. (2020). Projects. <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/projects/0/177-1.htm>
- Women's UN Report Network. (2017, March 23). *China — Challenges for women: Gender equality in employment & issues of balancing work & family*. <http://wunrn.com/2017/03/china-challenges-for-women-gender-equality-in-employment-issues-of-balancing-work-family/>
- World Economic Forum. (2020). *The global gender gap report 2020*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
- Xie, K. (2017, September 5). 'Her China dream': The aspirations of China's privileged daughters. *Discovery Society*. <https://discoversociety.org/2017/09/05/her-china-dream-the-aspirations-of-chinas-privileged-daughters/>
- Xinhua. (2021a, April 6). Poverty alleviation: China's experience and contribution. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-04/06/c_139860414.htm
- Xinhua. (2021b, April 29). *China's maternal mortality rate continues to decrease*. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021b-04/29/c_139914659.htm#:~:text=BEIJING%2C%20April%2029%20\(Xinhua\),a%20health%20official%20on%20Thursday.](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021b-04/29/c_139914659.htm#:~:text=BEIJING%2C%20April%2029%20(Xinhua),a%20health%20official%20on%20Thursday.)
- Xinhua (2021c, May 11). China's latest census reports more balanced gender ratio. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021c-05/11/c_139938390.htm
- Yip, W. (2021, May 25). China: The men who are single and the women who don't want kids. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57154574>
- Yu, J., & Xie, Y. (2018). Motherhood penalties and living arrangements in China. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 80(5), 1067–1086. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12496>
- Zeng, J., Pang, X., Zhang, L., Medina, A., & Rozelle, S. (2014). Gender inequality in education in China: A meta-regression analysis. *Contemporary Economics Policy*, 32(2), 474–491. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coep.12006>
- Yang, D. (2019, March 8). China marks highest rate of women in national congress, improvement needed to promote engagement. *China Global Television Network*. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d674d78456a4d33457a6333566d54/index.html>

- Zhang, J. (2017). The evolution of China's one-child policy and its effects on family outcomes. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(1), 141–160. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.31.1.141>
- Zhang, E. Y. & Huang, T. (2020, June 16). *Gender discrimination at work is dragging China's growth*. <https://www.piie.com/blogs/china-economic-watch/gender-discrimination-work-dragging-chinas-growth>
- Zhang, Y., & Hannum, E. (2015). Diverging fortunes: The evolution of gender wage gaps for singles, couples, and parents in China, 1989–2009. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 1(1), 15–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057150X14568769>
- Zhang, D., & Rahman, K. M. A. (2020). Government health expenditure, out-of-pocket payment and social inequality: A cross-national analysis of China and OECD countries. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 35(5), 1111–1126. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3017>
- Zhou, Y., Wang, T., Fu, J., Chen, M., Meng, Y., & Luo, Y. (2019). Access to reproductive health services among the female floating population of child-bearing age: A cross-sectional study in Changsha, China. *BMC Health Service Research*, 19(1), 540. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4334-4>



Educational Opportunities

Xiaoping Tong[✉] and *Anne Namatsi Lutomia*

The historical trajectory of Chinese women's education and leadership development distinctly exhibits policies that are influenced by the state. In the past, Chinese women were marginalized and could not access formal education. Many women leaders emerged across China; however, there is limited research on how Chinese women become leaders (Sun & Li, 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016; Zhao & Jones, 2017).

While leadership in China is changing, it is anchored in Confucianism social ideology and value system (Tung, 2002). Throughout this chapter, we draw from human resource development (HRD), leadership, and feminist perspectives. Specifically, national HRD perspectives assisted us in examining the history of Chinese government processes of human capital

X. Tong (✉)
Beihang University, Beijing, China
e-mail: txp_sibu@buaa.edu.cn

A. N. Lutomia
Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA
e-mail: alutomia@purdue.edu

as embedded in its policies (Alagaraja & Wang, 2012; Sun & Li, 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Leadership development and feminist perspectives were grounded in Bierema (2016) and McLean and Beigi (2016) on women's leadership development, achievements, and history.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the educational opportunities that Chinese women have had for leadership development. Therefore, we traced the history of Chinese education, outcomes, and emerging practices. We reviewed China's policies and their implications for women's leadership education. We then discussed government efforts to educate Chinese women as a pathway to leadership and achieved milestones. Additionally, we observed emerging trends in leadership development programs. Finally, we provided implications for research, theory, and practice, and then conclude.

HISTORY OF EDUCATING WOMEN LEADERS IN CHINA

Chinese rely on 2500-year-old Confucianism when making decisions about education. The history of China is divided into five phases: pre-1911, 1911–1949, 1950–1966, 1967–1976, and 1977–present. This division is made because of major historical events while considering the state of educating women leaders: the 1911 Revolution, the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the beginning of the reform and open policies.

Historical China: Pre-1911

According to Mak (2018), the dominance of Confucianism in Chinese social and official ideology in China can be traced to the Han Dynasty (B.C.E. 207–C.E. 207). There exists a strong interest in reading, writing, and painting in Confucian cultures (De Weerd, 2013). In ancient China, education in the classics led to sitting for the imperial examination, which, if passed, allowed them to be officially employed (Mak, 2018). This was a lifetime achievement marker reserved for men (Xie, 2017). Women were expected to study the four classic books, namely, *Nu Chieh* (女诫, *Lessons for Women*), *Nu Lun Yu* (女论语, *Analects on Women*), *Nei Hsun* (内训, *Admonishment for Imperial Harem*), and *Nu Fan Chieh Lu* (女范捷录, *Records of Model and Virtuous Women*) (Zhang, 2016). These books established standards for traditional women to be good housewives, such as the three obediences and the four virtues (Zhang, 2016). The three

obediences ask a woman to bow to her father, spouse, and son in different stages of her life (Cheng, 2008; as cited in Zhao & Jones, 2017). The four virtues manifest “physical charm, fidelity, propriety in speech” (Cheng, 2008; as cited in Zhao & Jones, 2017) and effectiveness in housework. In most of the feudal China era, women’s access to education was limited for elite families.

While Confucianism mainly impacted the Han ethnic group, the experiences of women in other groups, such as the Khitan (契丹) and the Jurchen (女真), were different. The Khitan ruled in the Liao dynasty, while the Jurchen ruled in the Jin dynasty. In these dynasties, women were coordinators and negotiators of the indigenous and Han cultures (De Weerd, 2013). Meanwhile, women warriors and empresses emerged in the northeast (Manchuria) (Johnson, 2011).

Remarkable women leaders emerged in China (Vanderbroek, 2014). Famous women rulers include Wu Zetian in the Tang dynasty and the Cixi Queen Mother in the Qing dynasty. They received classical girls’ education and later struggled to gain prominence during the times when the top rulers were usually men.

An important historical shift occurred in the late Qing dynasty with the entry of western forces. Western missionaries founded the earliest modern schools for girls (Mak, 2018). The first few Chinese women who studied abroad enrolled respectively at various universities in New York in 1881, Ohio State in 1884, and Michigan in 1892 (Zhang, 2018). Lee (1995) noted that Chinese women studied abroad in 1905, mostly in Japan and the United States (US), and later Europe. An official education system of the state admitting girls to schools was established in 1902 (Mak, 2018). Generally, the feudal education that continued until 1911 encouraged women to follow men.

Republic of China: 1911–1949

The 1911 Revolution marked a new era in China called the Republic of China. China Nationalists’ Party (CNP) controlled most parts of the country from 1911 to 1949. Generally, Chinese women did not attend college until 1912 (Xie, 2017). During the CNP administration period, international socio-political ties informed changes. For example, the May Fourth Movement in 1919 was important in transforming education from traditional Confucianism to science and technology and subsequently shifted women’s education (Forster, 2018). Markedly, the May Fourth

Movement raised topical issues about the education of girls and women, such as women's liberation and education equality. Particularly, in 1919, Peking University became coeducational (Lee, 1995).

The governance of CNP saw an increase of girl's and women's enrollment in education, thanks to the growth of the state's schooling system. Girls made up of 26% of national enrollment in primary education in 1945; they made up 20% and 18% in secondary and higher education respectively in 1946 (Mak, 2018). This signifies the advancement of girls' education from 1921 when girls' enrollment in formal education was quite limited, only 200 women were in higher education in 1922 (Lee, 1995).

The Chinese women's movement experienced an unprecedented climax during the anti-Japanese War from 1931 to 1945 (Mo, 2002). Women played many roles: soldiers, writers, politicians, academicians, general public, and ethnic minority members (Guo, 2005). Mo (2002) concluded that, the direct reason for wakening women's awareness of nation liberation was the violence of the Japanese troops. Nonetheless, the movement lacked women-driven consciousness (Mo, 2002).

The China Communist Party (CCP) was established in 1921 and took over the country in 1949. From 1921 to 1945, the CCP provided women with leadership educational opportunities at home and abroad enabling women to be involved in party affairs (Chen, 2005). Some graduates from educational institutions, such as the Communist University of the East in Moscow and Moscow's Sun Yat-sen University, were women (Benton, 2014; Vershinina et al., 2016). They include Xiang Jingyu (or Hsiang, Ching-Yu) and Zhang Xiyuan, who were among the few women members of the CCP at its inception and leaders of the Chinese women movement (Anonymous, n.d.a; Benton, 2014) and became top leaders of the CCP later. Socialism started to impact Chinese education significantly during the civil war from 1945 to 1949 (Bush & Haiyan, 2000).

CCP Control Before the Cultural Revolution: 1950–1966

Chairman Mao Zedong, a top leader of the CCP from its birth, set up education goals primarily to serve the party's objectives. Following the inception of the new China in October the 1st, 1949, until before the economic reform in 1978, Chinese education was controlled by the CCP and the government (Kennedy, 2009; Ngok, 2007) by supervising schools and determining the curriculum. The government formulated

the policies for primary education by setting targets to achieve universalization, building a teaching force, and developing the curriculum (Tsang, 2000). Higher education institutions founded before 1949 were nationalized and had their schools and departments reorganized in the early 1950s, following the Soviet style of organizing higher education structures (Anonymous, n.d.b). Following this shift, Peking University became the best liberal arts and science university and Tsinghua University specialized in engineering.

Another pivotal moment was the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1959 (Mak, 2018), a campaign to accelerate economic growth that increased student enrollment but was detrimental to education (Treiman, 2013) because of economic and human resource constraints. Well-intended educational policies such as running work-study schools, failed because of the misalignment between economic imperatives and educational system difficulties due to lack of physical resources and competent teachers (Kwong, 1979).

During the Cultural Revolution Period: 1967–1976

From 1967 to 1976, Chairman Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution nationally. Though retrogressive, on the surface, it improved the status of women (Mak, 2018) because Chairman Mao insisted on creating a gender-neutral country. Admittedly, the Cultural Revolution caused losses to education at all levels, especially higher education (Tsang, 2000). Tsang (2000) summarized six aspects of educational policies and development during this period: (1) education was reoriented as centered on political and ideological education; (2) many primary teachers in rural areas were forced to work in agriculture on a volunteer basis; (3) change in higher education included a dormant state of admissions of college students for six years and of post-graduate students for twelve years; (4) a previous emphasis on diversified and vocational education was canceled; (5) admissions to secondary teacher education schools were discontinued for five years; and (6) to make sure that teachers embraced and delivered the political and ideological education as mandated by the government, policies to change most teachers' capitalist world views were issued such as demanding teachers to attend communism training.

The participation of urban and rural women in the labor force improved during this period (Mak, 2018). As Mak (2018) stated, the Cultural Revolution period brought an increase in women's employment

as urban women were recruited by local cottage industries that were encouraged by the Chinese government. In rural areas, the redistribution of land to poor peasants blurred the difference between men and women, and women were consistently encouraged to take part in agricultural production. The death of Chairman Mao in 1976 ended the Cultural Revolution.

Post-Cultural Revolution Period: 1976–Present

The reform and open policies promoted by Deng Xiaoping from 1978 (Mak, 2018) transformed China. The contribution of education to national development was understood by policymakers (Ngok, 2007). Yet, women's role in at least the first two decades of this era was peripheral, while the practical impact of the reform on women was mixed (Mak, 2018). While girls were increasingly supported to receive education, women lost advantages in the new labor market unlike the equal gender status emphasized in Mao's era.

The recent two decades have seen the expansion of higher education and enhancement of other-level education that has offered far more opportunities for women leadership development in many sectors. Along with the fast socio-economic development of the whole society, women leaders are now found in diverse sectors. Challenges for these women leaders are that they face conflicting roles between motherhood and workplace leadership and have to reconcile them (Tsang et al., 2011; Zhao & Jones, 2017).

In summary, the education of men has generally been privileged compared to that of women, while this practice continues to change. Since the birth of the CCP, Chinese women's educational opportunities have expanded. Especially, the 1970s saw an increased number of educated Chinese women taking up leadership roles.

PRESENT LAWS AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN CHINA

This section discusses some laws and policies enacted by the Chinese government and their impact on the education of Chinese women leaders. Subsequently, we illustrate that Chinese women's access to education is not a monolithic experience.

Universalization of Nine-Year Compulsory Education

Education is important in forming the basis of HRD in a country. The Chinese government pursued universal nine-year compulsory education among school-aged children to eliminate illiteracy. This program is a strategy to enhance HRD, poverty alleviation, and social development (Zhang & Zhao, 2006).

China enacted the Compulsory Education Law in 1986 (Rong & Shi, 2001). This law stipulates that all children aged seven to fifteen must enroll and receive education for nine years. Middle school education became universal in cities and coastal areas during the first six years of implementation, followed by the countryside within ten years. Where implemented, primary education generally reduced poverty, especially in urban areas; the Law was relatively not well implemented for older rural students (Song, 2012).

Rural–Urban Migration and Hukou Law

The *hukou* system was enacted in the 1950s when the Chinese government implemented policies designed to control the movement of people. The *hukou* (residence permit) system is said to have been one of the factors that led to disparities in the current education system. Residents were divided as situated in an urban or rural households. A Chinese classification determined residency and relevant benefits (Solinger, 1999). Earlier on, urban householders got rice from the state, while peasants grew their own (Potter & Potter, 1990). One's dossier, which records the study, work, political involvement, performance, and evaluation throughout critical life stages, is related to *hukou*. Usually, one's dossier and *hukou* go together (Anonymous, 2013), and they restrict one's mobility. Under such policies, migrant workers living away from home face discrimination in accessing home loans and better jobs. The *hukou* system also limits flexibility for students to access educational opportunities in non-residential cities. Beginning in 2014, some local governments started implementing changes so that children of longer-term migrants could sit for college entrance examinations in their hosting provinces (OECD, 2016).

Deng Xiaoping relaxed rural–urban migration restrictions brought by the *hukou* classification. *Hukou* classification was inherited from their parents at birth and could not be easily changed. In the mid-1980s, a new

policy introduced fixed farm output quota to each household, leading to increased productivity in agriculture that rendered peasants redundant. The *hukou* system was then modified to allow migrants from rural areas to work in cities without changing their *hukous*. Thus, an urban society mixed with urban householders and rural migrant workers emerged. In 2016, a new policy was enacted to give migrant workers chances of acquiring an urban *hukou*; additionally, the Chinese government aimed at expanding *hukou* residency permits to 100 million migrant workers by 2020 (OECD, 2016). Early 2020, the central government urged for achieving this goal by the end of 2020 (China National Committee for Development & Reform, 2020).

Relatedly, according to Xu (2016), during the rural-urban migration, women were left in the villages to support the family and carry out farm work. Women who grew up in rural areas were marginalized in terms of educational opportunities and labor market (Sun & Li, 2017). To mitigate this problem, the Chinese government has promoted a new policy of building a new socialist countryside where the skill sets of women in rural areas are improved (Xu, 2016).

Enaction and Modification of the One-Child Policy

Though presently relaxed to allow two children per couple in all geographic locations, China's one-child policy was started in 1978 (Sen, 2015). China introduced the one-child policy in response to concerns about the social and economic consequences that were foreseen due to the increased population (Kane & Choi, 1999). Arguably, Chinese women's education benefitted from the one-child policy, because the CCP deployed extensive education about gender equality and the role of women, leading to an increase in the proportion of women on campus (Sudbeck, 2012). Moreover, "Parents of singleton daughters are now encouraging these young women to strive academically, study abroad, and have a successful career" (Sudbeck, 2012, p. 54). For those born before the policy was introduced, slightly over 35% of those in higher education were women. Following this policy, the percentage of women in higher education increased to 41% in 2016 (World Bank, 2016). A major criticism of the one-child policy was that it strengthened the preference for boys, resulting in large numbers of abortions and infanticide (Kane & Choi, 1999; Mak, 2018).

In 2015, the China government officially ended the one-child policy and started to allow each couple to have two children (China News Service, 2015). Further, due to the current low birth rate of the whole society, some population researchers now encourage each woman to have three or even more children. The preference for boys over girls has largely changed though it persists among older generations. Gender equality at birth and later is generally embraced by younger generations who were born during/after the reform and open policies eras.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN CHINA'S CURRENT EDUCATION

Here we discuss China's education system—compulsory K-12, high middle school, vocational, higher, and adult education. We demonstrate how the education system is self-contradictory in supporting the leadership development of women. One objective in this section is to identify how disparities in educational opportunities such as that between rural and urban areas impact the formation of women's leadership.

K-12 Education

The goal of instituting nine-year compulsory education across China has been basically achieved (Ngok, 2007). However, education resources are unevenly distributed in China, with first-tier cities and those in the coastal areas enjoying richer resources while other areas lagging behind (OECD, 2016). The central government has been striving to bridge this gap; for example, educational leadership development, including women, is being addressed in Northwest China because most educational leaders there have limited teaching experience (Militello & Berger, 2010; OECD, 2016). Educational leadership development is also on the agenda in more developed regions.

According to the China Ministry of Education statistics, there were 40,376,900 students enrolled in high schools in 2015, with an enrollment rate of 87.0% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). The Chinese central government has issued an important goal of making high school education more popular. Specifically, the enrollment rate in every province and region should reach 90% on average by 2020 (Xi, 2017) and it has reached 89.5% by 2019 (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The Ministry of Education has stressed the importance

of improving student subsidy policies and increasing national financial aid for high school students from economically underprivileged families (Xi, 2017). Nonprofits assist in closing gendered education disparities by sponsoring girls at high school and university levels, such as the Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC, 2018).

The upward trend in educational attainment in China, mainly fueled by compulsory education, has resulted in nearly equal numbers of boys and girls enrolled in education (Treiman, 2013). In 2019, girls in Chinese kindergartens and pre-schools took up 46.9% of all the enrolled, which increased by 1.4% from 2010; there were 71.573 million girls in the compulsory education, which composed 46.5% of all the enrolled and increased by 2.7% from 2018; there were 18.82 million girls in the senior high school education including all the regular, adult, and vocational senior high schools, which composed 47.1% of all the enrolled students in this stage (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Closing the gender gap for girls' access to K-12 education has been almost accomplished.

Curriculum reforms in the education system have been slow (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). China has historically modeled *yingshi jiaoyu* (examination-oriented education) with a curriculum that emphasizes memorization and examination. Nonetheless, the *suzhi jiaoyu* (quality-oriented education) curriculum reform now focuses on developing well-rounded students with abilities including problem solving and creativity. Moreover, it is gender inclusive (OECD, 2016).

Education serves as a basis for girls to outstand and grow as potential future leaders. In the Chinese K-12 education system, regardless of a gender bias with a preference for boys (Brown & Park, 2002), Chinese girls outperform boys in languages (Huang et al., 2015). Gender disadvantages for girls still need to be more thoroughly eliminated though, since academically underperforming girls disproportionately dropped out of primary schools compared to boys, especially in rural China (OECD, 2016). Overall, by the end of K-12 education, many girl student leaders have been emerging.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The inclusiveness of vocational education leads to educational fairness and social equity for disadvantaged groups (Kong, 2018). China's Ministry of Education stated that there are almost 15,000 secondary technical/vocational schools and over 1100 tertiary technical/vocational

institutes. According to World Bank (2016), over 11 million Chinese students enrolled in technical and vocational schools or institutes, at junior secondary, senior secondary, and tertiary levels. VET has a key economic function in up-skilling and integrating young people in the labor market. VET graduates also provide high-quality technical skills to meet the rising need for skilled workers.

In China, girls and women students from less advantaged family backgrounds are more likely to attend VET (Wang, 2017). In 2018, there were 6,571,223 (42.25%) girl students in secondary VET (Zheng et al., 2020). In 2019, in tertiary vocational education, there are 6,242,162 (48.74%) women undergraduates in regular institutions, 1,810,670 (55.33%) in adult institutions, and 2,439,712 (43.28%) in web-based programs (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). A dilemma faced by girls in VET is that their educational time and resources such as opportunities to receive longer than half-a-year training are commonly less than boys (Zheng et al., 2020). The VET conditions are not very advantageous for girls' leadership development but the skill education still provides them basis for flourishing after entering the labor market.

Regular Higher Education

Chinese higher education has become popular since the late 1970s, particularly in the 1990s (Ngok, 2007). With the inception of Projects 211 and 985, and the current Double First-class initiative (Sun, 2017), the government has been focusing on creating world-class universities. Some Chinese women leaders believe that university education was critical in their ascendancy to power (Tsang et al., 2011).

Earlier research indicated that gender inequity existed with fewer women at undergraduate and doctoral levels, while no such difference existed at master's level (Ngok, 2007; Tatlow, 2012). A recent study concluded that the gender gap had closed at higher-than-primary levels of schooling (Treiman, 2013). According to statistics published by the China Ministry of Education for 2017, there were 14,468,508 (52.5%) women undergraduates in regular higher education institutions; 3,198,256 (58.8%) women undergraduates in adult higher education institutions; 3,483,796 (47.3%) women web-based undergraduates (Development Planning Division, 2018). In 2017, a total of 2,277,564 students graduated with master's degrees, among whom 1,141,603

(55.1%) were men and 1,135,961 (44.9%) were women (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). Additionally, on campus, there were 1,135,961 (49.9%) women master's degree students and 142,173 (39.3%) women doctoral degree students (Development Planning Division, 2018). In 2019, women took up 50.6% of all on-campus graduate students (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Women students have gained equal education representation with men up to the master's level but not at the doctoral level.

In what follows, we discuss how leadership is developed in Chinese universities. First, leadership development is under *tuanwei* (the Communist Youth League Committee) that oversees student organizations (Wang, 2016). Some students perceived *tuanwei* and its related ideologies as flawed and then chose to study abroad (Chen & Jordan, 2016). Domestic students, however, follow the Communist ideology.

Second, women-dominating public universities are generally famous for their role in the formation of women leaders. The China Women's University (2018) is a predominantly women's university with only its broadcasting major admitting men, while all other undergraduate majors admit only women (Cao, 2015). The China Women's University (2018) has educated more future women leaders than any other university in China. All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), to which the China Women's University is affiliated, is governed by the ruling party and upholds women's rights and interests to promote equality between genders.

Third, China's Ministry of Education issued notices that forbid most colleges from recruiting students based on gender and from using set student gender ratios during enrollment (Tordesillas, 2015). According to ACWF (2018), only institutions that offer special majors, such as military science, national defense, and national security, are exempt from such discrimination prohibition. For example, in a 2010 directive issued by the Ministry of Education which is still valid at present (Gansu Education, 2017), the number of women early admissions to certain universities in the areas of detective science, law and order management, border defense management, and criminal science and technology should not exceed 15% (The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders & a Coalition of NGOs, 2014). The quota policy is based on a default understanding that most such majors do not recruit women. From the Ministry's data and policies, women and men access equal education opportunities, but

women are not encouraged to pursue military-oriented disciplines as they are deemed as dangerous.

Last, an increasing number of international universities from the US, Australia, Hong Kong, Canada, France, England, Ireland, and others (Ennew & Fuji, 2009; Song et al., 2012) have established a presence in China. Elements of internationalization of higher education in China focus on global skills, content, and research.

Workplace Learning, Professional Development, and Adult Education

The development of women leaders in Chinese workplace occurs through practice, learning, training, and other approaches. A significant phenomenon in the workplace training in Chinese corporations is to transform managers into global leaders through their corporate universities (Sham, 2007). Noticeably, some companies in China develop their leaders less systematically than their US counterparts (Qiao et al., 2007), which may be due to the short history of corporate universities in China compared to the United States (Tong, 2018). Developing leaders less systematically is informed by Confucianism-based values that have influenced leadership values and behaviors such as paternalistic and hierarchical leadership (Li et al., 2017). These traditions in developing leaders continue to privilege men while marginalizing women (Huang & Aaltio, 2014; Lutomia et al., 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016).

A critique of Chinese corporate university training in leadership development is that only a limited number of such programs focus on women, and yet, because Chinese women face unique cultural biases, their leadership development should differ from that of men. Generally, there is a paucity of training programs focused on woman leadership development with an exception of China Resource University, the corporate university of the China Resource Corporation (China Resource Corporation, 2018). The lack of customization of leadership development for Chinese women in the workplace can be explained in three ways. First, China is short of HRD professionals (Qiao et al., 2007) who could customize such programs, as there is currently no academic program entirely devoted to HRD in Chinese universities. Second, because women are newcomers in corporations, younger women lack mentors who look like them (Huang & Aaltio, 2014). Third, Chinese mentoring practice is tied to *Guanxi* (social relationships) that privilege men (Lutomia et al., 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Due to the lack of

customized programs for developing women leadership at the workplace, Chinese women invest in individual learning and education (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016).

Higher education is an important niche for leadership development. Chinese universities offer lifelong learning and leadership skills development. In Tsinghua University, the Executive MBA develops three types of leaders: students from state-owned, multinational, and home-grown organizations (Barton & Ye, 2013). Huang and Aaltio (2014) observed that working Chinese women rely on such programs to gain workplace leadership.

There are government-related organizations that offer leadership development experiences and training. They consist of organizations such as All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). These organizations align with the principles of communism, one of which states that Chinese women's ultimate goals are to serve the nation and the people (Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005). The ACWF is responsible for promoting government policies to women (ACWF, 2018). The ACFTU is the leading body of trade union federations locally and industrial unions nationally. The trade unions motivate workers by setting up professional ethics sessions that encourage hard work and organizing vocational training programs.

Another pathway for leadership development is through short workshops, conferences, and symposia held online and offline. An example is the annual Asian Women in Leadership Summit (AWLS) held in Singapore and other Asian countries. It is a platform where prominent leaders, mostly women, share their experiences (ACWF, 2018).

Educating Leaders Within the CCP

Beyond the education system, there were women leaders in the CCP, such as Wu Yi and Ren Changxia. Wu Yi, the first woman Vice-Premier of China, was educated in China. Ren Changxia, a former director of the Public Security Bureau of Dengfeng City (Dai & Xu, 2004), graduated from a Chinese security college. Education is central in the development of Chinese women leaders within the CCP.

Apart from the aforementioned leaders, the lack of women leaders in China is partly due to the impact of some unequal values carried from the feudal society (Dong, 2013). Within the CCP, women have historically held fewer positions. There has, however, been an improvement

since 1949. Women composed 12% of the nation's Congress in 1954 and 10% of the CCP membership in 1956 (China National Bureau of Statistics, 1990; as cited in Mak, 2018). Women's membership in the party increased slightly to 14% and in the Congress to 21% by 1988 (China National Bureau of Statistics, 1990; as cited in Mak, 2018). Women's presence in all cadres increased to 31% by 1991 (Mak, 2018). More women now serve in leadership positions within the CCP's political agency and corporate units (Tong & Liu, 2014). In 2019, women composed 24.9% of the National People's Congress, which increased by 1.5% from its last cohort; women composed 20.4% of the People's Political Consultative Conference, which increased by 2.6% from its last cohort (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Nonetheless, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles when compared to men, particularly, women leaders lack representation at senior levels and in political influence (Mak, 2018; Tsang et al., 2011). This is partly due to selection and promotional procedures that are influenced by the patriarchal tradition leading to acts such as men's favoritism and political allegiances that thwart career mobility of women (Tsang et al., 2011). Thus, to get promoted, women managers who work for state-owned organizations pursue political education to signal that they value the party and government (Granrose, 2007).

To correct gender imbalance, China also has affirmative action policies, but its implementation has been unsuccessful. The CCP has continuously issued policies that are relevant to women's career development (Pan & Shi, 2011). For example, the government has set up quotas for women leaders (Tsang et al., 2011). Also, in 2011, the central government issued *The Outline of Chinese Women Development from 2011–2020* that formulated rules for protecting women's development opportunities (Pan & Shi, 2011).

Education enhances women's willingness and capability to work (Rong & Shi, 2001), as well as strengthens women's competencies. To educate women leaders, the CCP also utilize party universities and schools for developing management competencies of women, along with men. For example, Leader Management School of the China Ministry of Organization was among the first Chinese entities who introduced action learning into leadership training.

OUTCOMES, TRENDS, AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

Economic growth in China has driven the improvement of education while affecting gender disparities. Unequal economic development increases regional disparities in educational attainment for different groups, especially women.

Milestones and Achievements

Chinese leaders need to pay more attention to the growing gender gap in education. The China economic reform leading to decentralization and marketization following the open-door policy has weakened the role of the state in education leading to mixed outcomes. Here, we outline some women and the milestones they have achieved plus statistical data on women's leadership.

One of the greatest achievements of Chinese women's leadership education is the winning of a Nobel Prize in 2016 by Tu Youyou for her medical research. She attended Peking University and became a leading researcher at the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences. Chinese women leaders have also emerged in the technology industry and have shared positive career development experiences. According to Yang (2018), Chinese women, particularly entrepreneurs in technologies, are educated locally, globally, or both. Jean Liu, the president of Didi Chuxing, a ride-sharing firm, received her bachelor's degree from Peking University and continued at Harvard. Kathy Xu Xin, the founder of Capital Today, graduated from Nanjing University, has invested in several multibillion-dollar companies.

Although the one-child policy is no longer practiced, its aftermath includes helping women climb the career ladder in China. China rates relatively higher than most other Asian countries in promoting women to senior positions (Sun & Li, 2017; Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016). Specifically, by 2014, the percentages of women serving on boards in Asia are: Malaysia, 10.9%; China, 10.7%; India, 6.7%; Indonesia, 6.0%; South Korea, 2.4%; and Japan, 1.6% (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014). In 2019, 33.4% and 36.4% of Chinese corporate board members and supervisory board members were women, respectively (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Despite such achievements and high labor force participation of Chinese women, the Catalyst (2017) indicated that, women leaders are still underrepresented in China. In 2016, women accounted for 17% of legislators, senior officials, and managers in China. Only 17.5% of firms in China have women as top managers. Additionally, whereas more women in China hold corporate board seats compared to other major Asian economies, this is a lackluster percentage in comparison with developed countries: France, 29.5%; Germany, 23%; and USA, 13.7% (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014).

Zhang (2012) and Huang and Aaltio (2014) pointed out that sociocultural barriers may explain underrepresentation of women leaders. These include men dominating networks, social stereotypes, and work overload due to dual responsibilities. Also, Zhao and Jones (2017) discovered that women reject the leader identity that is considered to be ambitious and aggressive which is incongruent with the virtuous wife and caring mother cultural identity.

General Trends in Educating Women Leaders in China

Chinese women and girls continue to face cultural and environmental barriers in obtaining equality of leadership development. For instance, Zhao and Jones (2017) found that the context of Chinese higher education continues to be affected by gendered norms. That is, women and girls face challenges in acknowledging and promoting their leadership as equal to men's despite being granted more equal access to education.

First, girls and women are gaining equal access to educational and professional opportunities. The one-child policy “helped to greatly improve the position in terms of gender equality, parental investment, educational attainment, career, and in terms of the familial social and political participation” (Sudbeck, 2012, p. 55). Beyond outnumbering men at university, there are four other ways in which Chinese women are closing the gender gap, namely: taking part in the labor force, spurring online commerce, generating wealth, and buying sound boxes and bitcoins (World Economic Forum, 2017a). Despite these optimistic signs, a warning signal is that Chinese women's participation in the labor force has been continuously decreasing over the recent three decades, with the number being 62.5% in 2015 and 59.8% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020).

Second, western-educated Chinese are returning to serve their nation and fellow citizens. Liu Yu, a woman associate professor in Tsinghua University, exemplifies a returnee and leader. Previously, the percentage of returnees overall from study-abroad programs was low. The ratio of returnees was only 28.6% in 2007 (Chen, 2018). Moreover, returnees usually served in research, education, and other professional fields (Duan, 2018). In the future, the portion of returnees overall is expected to increase, as 83.3% of about 5 million study-abroad Chinese scholars from 1978–2016 returned to China (Chen, 2018) and this ratio rose to 83.7% by 2017 (Duan, 2018). Unfortunately, there exists no such data on Chinese women returnees along currently, since such studies have been quite rare. The future Chinese returnees are likely to enter more diverse sectors, such as the tech industry.

Role of Government in Further Empowering Women Leaders

According to Zeng (2014), due to the 2010 proactive policy for women to take up government positions, it is expected that the Chinese government will provide more educational opportunities for women, resulting in extended access to leadership. The Chinese government attaches importance to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to the development of women. Given this, All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, China Disabled Persons' Federation, and the China Association of Science and Technology have all effectively pressed ahead with their gender equality work in line with respective guidelines. These organizations pursue leadership capacity building within the country and abroad. For instance, ACWF and Yale University established a collaboration in 2010 to develop a management and leadership program targeted at senior-level women leaders representing both the national and provincial levels (Yale School of Management, 2020).

The ACWF is the largest NGO in China dedicated to women. According to Ma (2005), Chinese women and the government were pivotal in organizing the Fourth World Conference on Women and its accompanying forum in Beijing in 1995. Outcomes of the conference continue to inform government policies on gender equality and rights, such as education (Attane, 2013). Quota for women led to 86.2% of government departments at the county level offering leadership positions

to women in 2014, an increase of over 26% compared to 2000 (Zeng, 2014). The Global Gender Gap Report (2017), which measures gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities, ranked China at 100 out of 144 surveyed countries (World Economic Forum, 2017b), presenting the government with major challenges in meeting gender gap closure.

Here, we have recognized that the experiences of Chinese women leadership development are steeped in global and local factors. Though requiring more improvement, the information technology industry and state-affiliated NGOs represent areas where Chinese women are relatively thriving.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, THEORY, AND PRACTICE

The chapter now turns to outline implications for women's development through education and HRD efforts. We urge further empirical studies, theory building, and supportive culture formation.

Research

Findings on experiences of Chinese women in education and how they develop their leadership skills are limited. Scholars, such as Bierema (2016), observed the same phenomenon in the United States. Relatedly, we concur with McLean and Beigi's (2016) demand for creative and innovative research approaches in studying women's leadership. For instance, studying the formation of Chinese women leaders from cultural perspectives (Wang & Shirmohammadi, 2016), such as *Guanxi*, would be innovative and useful. Leadership opportunities in China are tied to *Guanxi*, which is rooted in Confucianism that requires socializing after work and is prohibitive for women's reputation. Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) observed that it is a paradox that Chinese women leaders in the IT industry leveraged *Guanxi* for career mobility. Understanding how Chinese women leverage *Guanxi* would help identify how they gain leadership opportunities through networks (Nolan, 2015).

In addition, the United Nations (2020) reported that, globally, the continuing coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has reversed economic progress conditions that had improved livelihood of women. The extent of this effect is not fully understood. A longitudinal research capturing

leadership development experiences of Chinese women in presently and post-COVID-19 era can inform future efforts of developing Chinese women leaders.

Theory

Agreeably, there is a dearth in theorizing Chinese women's leadership education. To this end, Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) offered that understanding the development of leaders is a collaborative effort that requires a variety of stakeholders and has to be understood beyond the western context. The current global position of China calls for theorizing Chinese women's leadership education as local and global. Empirically, Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) suggested that researchers of Chinese women's leadership development use mixed research design and archival data and develop indigenous instruments. Along this line, qualitative inquiries including ethnography designs, case studies, critical theory, grounded theory, and phenomenology, will all be informative in understanding experiences and theory building of Chinese women and leadership.

Practice

This chapter is a resource that can inform leadership development practices, such as the national leadership nurturing of children aged seven to twelve years within the Little Red Pioneers within the CCP (Woronov, 2007). The Little Red Pioneers sets a foundation for future women leaders of the CCP (Zhao & Jones, 2017). Wang and Shirmohammadi (2016) developed practical guidelines for different constituents in China that can assist women to become leaders. These guidelines urge stakeholders to create organizational cultures that enhance women's career development, adopt gender-balanced policies, and provide continuous learning opportunities by appreciating women's leadership styles, developing family friendly policies, and creating pathways for learning and career development in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

We have illustrated that access of Chinese women to educational opportunities informs their propensity to become leaders and is predicated on varying stakeholders. The education of Chinese women leaders has been contradictory but is now on course. The Chinese government plays a key role in developing and implementing policies relevant to opportunities for women to become leaders. There is a need for more research on Chinese women's leadership education from diversified perspectives. Further, unleashing the leadership potential of Chinese women requires more inclusive practices. The ascendance of Chinese women into broad leadership positions, with educational support, will be instrumental in increasing the impact of China presently and in a post-COVID-19 world.

REFERENCES

- ACWF. (2018). *Asian Women Leadership Summit – China*. <http://www.womenofchina.cn/>
- Alagaraja, M., & Wang, J. (2012). Development of a national HRD strategy model: Cases of India and China. *Human Resource Development Review*, 11(4), 407–429. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484312446190>
- Anonymous. (2013). 中国高等院校院系调整 [*Adjustment of schools and departments of Chinese higher education institutions*]. <http://gz.bendibao.com/z/hukou/2013118/115115.shtml>
- Anonymous. (n.d.a). 向警予大事年表 [*Chronology of great events of Xiang, Jingyu*]. <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/144964/145598/8811738.html>
- Anonymous. (n.d.b). 中国高等院校院系调整 [*Adjustment of schools and departments of Chinese higher education institutions*]. Retrieved 25 December, 2020, from <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/中国高等院校院系调整>
- Attane, I. (2013). *The demographic masculinization of China – Hoping for a son*. Springer International.
- Barton, D., & Ye, M. (2013). *Developing China's business leaders: A conversation with Yingyi Qian*. <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/leadership/developing-chinas-business-leaders>
- Benton, G. (Ed.). (2014). *Prophets unarmed: Chinese Trotskyists in revolution, war, jail, and the return from limbo*. Koninklijke Brill.
- Bierema, L. L. (2016). Women's leadership: Troubling notions of the "ideal" (male) leader. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641398>

- Brown, P. H., & Park, A. (2002). Education and poverty in rural China. *Economics of Education Review*, 21(6), 523–541. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7757\(01\)00040-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7757(01)00040-1)
- Bush, T., & Haiyan, Q. (2000). Leadership and culture in Chinese education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 20(2), 58–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2000.10600183>
- Cao, W. (2015). “中华女子学院”，一个怎样的神秘所在 [The China Women's University: What a secret existence it is]. <http://blog.sciencenet.cn/blog-439051-904900.html>
- Chen, T., & Jordan, M. (2016). Why so many Chinese students come to the U.S. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-so-many-chinese-students-come-to-the-u-s-1462123552>
- Chen, Y. (2005). 中国共产党妇女参政思想及其发展历程 [The thoughts and development course of women's participation in politics within the Chinese Communist Party]. <http://wap.cnki.net/touch/web/Journal/Article/DSYJ200504013.html>
- Chen, Z. (2018). 10 年，从 3.15: 1 到 1.2: 1 [From 3.15: 1 to 1.2: 1 in 10 years]. *The First International Forum on Young Talents in Jiangxi Normal University, Jiangxi Normal University*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=CN>
- Cheng, L. (2008). The key to success: English language testing in China. *Language Testing*, 25(1), 15–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532207083743>
- China National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 2019 年《中国妇女发展纲要 (2011—2020 年)》统计监测报告 [The 2019 Statistics and Surveillance Report of “China women development outline from 2011 to 2020”]. http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/202012/t20201218_1810126.html
- China National Bureau of Statistics. (1990). *Zhongguo tongji nianjian 1989 (Statistical Year-book of China 1989)*. Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe.
- China National Committee for Development and Reform. (2020). 国家发展改革委关于印发《2020 年新型城镇化建设和城乡融合发展重点任务》的通知 [The notice of National Committee for Development and Reform on issuing the “2020 Major tasks of new-type city and town construction and the merge and development of cities and countryside”]. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2020-04/09/content_5500696.htm
- China News Service. (2015). 中国全面放开“二胎”政策 [China fully open the “two children” policy]. Retrieved from <https://www.chinanews.com/gn/2015/10-29/7596619.shtml>
- China Resource Corporation. (2018). 集团举办女性领导力培训项目 [The corporation hosts a training program on woman leadership]. http://cru.crc.com.cn/newsandinfo/dxxw/201803/t20180313_450421.htm

- Credit Suisse Research Institute. (2014). *The CS gender 3000: Women in senior leadership*. http://30percentclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014-09-23_Research_Institute_Women_in_Business.pdf
- Dai, P., & Xu, Y. (2004). 百姓心中的丰碑—追记公安局长的楷模任长霞 [A monument in the hearts of common people—Changxia Ren, the model for directors of public security bureaus from memory]. <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/1026/2542205.html>
- De Weerdt, H. (2013). Women of the conquest dynasties: Gender and identity in Liao and Jin China. *Journal of Social History*, 46(4), 1087–1089. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/sht029>
- Dello-Iacovo, B. (2009). Curriculum reform and ‘quality education’ in China: An overview. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29(3), 241–249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2008.02.008>
- Development Planning Division. (2018). 各级各类学校女学生数 [Number of female students of schools by type and level]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2017/qg/201808/t20180808_344694.html
- Dong, L. (2013). 干部提拔莫要“谈女色变” [Do not take a big fuss when women cadres are promoted into higher leadership positions]. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/pinglun/n/2013/0508/c241220-21409521.html>
- Duan, N. (2018). 四十年, 留学生的强国路 [The nation-strengthening journey of study-abroad Chinese over forty years]. *China Scholars Abroad*, 32(8), 8–13. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=CN>
- EGRC. (2018). *Programs*. <https://egrc.ca/>
- Ennew, C. T., & Fujia, Y. (2009). Foreign universities in China: A case study. *European Journal of Education*, 44(1), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2008.01368>
- Forster, E. (2018). *1919 – The year that changed China: A new history of the new culture movement* (Vol. 2). Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.
- Gansu Education. (2017). 考生注意: 报考公安院校要求 [Attention, examinees: Requirements for registering for the examination for entering public security institutions]. https://www.sohu.com/a/152183809_407266
- Granrose, C. S. (2007). Gender differences in career perceptions in the People’s Republic of China. *Career Development International*, 12(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430710724802>
- Guo, H. (2005). 女子在抗日战争中的地位与作用 [The status and impact of women in Anti-Japanese War]. *Journal of China Women’s University*, 17(4), 85–89. <https://doi.org/10.13277/j.cnki.jcwu.2005.04.015>
- Huang, G., Xie, Y., & Xu, H. (2015). Cognitive ability: Social correlates and consequences in contemporary China. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 47(4), 287–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21620555.2015.1032161>

- Huang, J., & Aaltio, I. (2014). Guanxi and social capital: Networking among women managers in China and Finland. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 39, 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.09.002>
- Johnson, L. (2011). *Women of the conquest dynasties: Gender and identity in Liao and Jin China*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Kane, P., & Choi, C. Y. (1999). China's one child family policy. *BMJ*, 319(7215), 992–994. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.319.7215.992>
- Kennedy, J. J. (2009). Maintaining popular support for the Chinese Communist Party: The influence of education and the state-controlled media. *Political Studies*, 57(3), 517–536. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00740.x>
- Kong, M. (2018). Study on fairness of secondary vocational education funding in China. *Science Journal of Education*, 6(1), 17–21. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.sjedu.20180601.13>
- Kwong, J. (1979). The educational experiment of the Great Leap Forward, 1958–1959: Its inherent contradictions. *Comparative Education Review*, 23(3), 443–455. <https://doi.org/10.1086/446072>
- Lee, W. Y. (1995). Women's education in traditional and modern China. *Women's History Review*, 4(3), 345–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029500200092>
- Lutomia, A. N., Li, P., Yassine, R. A., & Tong, X. (2017). The Role of Guanxi, Ubuntu, and Wasta in shaping workplace leadership and culture: A conceptual framework. In Z. Nedelko & M. Brzozowski (Eds.), *Exploring the influence of personal values and cultures in the workplace* (pp. 54–75). IGI Global.
- Ma, Q. (2005). *Non-governmental organizations in contemporary China: Paving the way to civil society?* Routledge.
- Mak, G. (2018). The People's Republic of China. In G. Mak (Ed.), *Women, education, and development in Asia: Cross-national perspectives* (pp. 3–28). Routledge.
- McLean, G. N., & Beigi, M. (2016). The importance of worldviews on women's leadership to HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 260–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641419>
- Militello, M., & Berger, J. B. (2010). Understanding educational leadership in North-west China. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 13(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603120902980812>
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). *Number of female students of schools by type and Level*. http://en.moe.gov.cn/Resources/Statistics/edu_stat2017/national/201808/t20180808_344694.html
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2020). 各级各类学校女学生数 [Number of Female Students of Schools by Type and Level]. http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2019/qg/202006/t20200611_464800.html

- Mo, Q. (2002). 略论妇女运动在抗日战争时期的地位和特点 [The summary of the status and the characteristics of women movement in the period of Anti-Japanese War]. (D231–305). [Master's thesis]. *The CNKI Dissertation and Thesis Database*. <https://wap.cnki.net/touch/web/Dissertation/Article/10530-2003020187.html>
- Ngok, K. (2007). Chinese education policy in the context of decentralization and marketization: Evolution and implications. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 8(1), 142–157. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03025840>
- Nolan, J. (2015). Guanxi: A critical review. In T. Wright (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliography in Chinese Studies* (pp. 1–30). Oxford University Press.
- OECD. (2016). *Education in China: A snapshot*. <https://www.oecd.org/china/Education-in-China-a-snapshot.pdf>
- Pan, Y., & Shi, Y. (2011). 57 个目标保障妇女权益 [57 goals to assure the benefits of women]. Retrieved 12–25–2020 from http://www.mj.org.cn/mzzz/content/2014-06/05/content_145582.htm
- Pittinsky, T. L., & Zhu, C. (2005). Contemporary public leadership in China: A research review and consideration. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(6), 921–939. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.09.003>
- Potter, S., & Potter, J. M. (1990). *China's peasants: The anthropology of a revolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Qiao, J. X., Rothwell, W. J., & Vicere, A. A. (2007, February 28–March 4). *Leadership development in China: How the companies develop their leaders and what critical factors contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of leadership development practices*. Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference in The Americas. Indianapolis, IN.
- Rong, X. L., & Shi, T. (2001). Inequality in Chinese education. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 10(26), 107–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560124330>
- Sen, A. (2015). *Amartya Sen: Women's progress outdid China's one-child policy*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/02/opinion/amartya-sen-womens-progress-outdid-chinas-one-child-policy.html>
- Sham, C. (2007). An exploratory study of corporate universities in China. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 19(4), 257–264. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620710747933>
- Solinger, D. (1999). *Contesting citizenship in urban China: Peasant migrants, the state, and the logic of the market*. University of California Press.
- Song, Y. (2012). Poverty reduction in China: The contribution of popularizing primary education. *China & World Economy*, 20(1), 105–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-124X.2012.01275.x>
- Song, Y., Ma, J., Xia, G., & Sudbeck, K. (2012). The effects of China's one-child policy: The significance for Chinese women. *Nebraska Anthropologist*, 179, 43–60.

- Sudbeck, K. (2012). The effects of China's one-child policy: The significance for Chinese women. *Nebraska Anthropologist*, 27, 43–60. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro/179>
- Sun, J. (2017). 权威发布! “双一流”建设高校及建设学科名单公布 [Released with power! “Double First-class” construction universities and disciplines name list announced]. <http://edu.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0921/c367001-29549883.html>
- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). Women in leadership in China: Past, present, and future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Sun, & G. McLean (Eds.), *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership* (pp. 19–35). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54996-5_2
- Tatlow, D. (2012). *Women in China face rising university entry barriers*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/08/world/asia/08iht-educledc08.html>
- The Catalyst. (2017). *Women in the workforce: China*. <https://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-workforce-china>
- The China Women's University. (2018). *Admissions*. <http://www.admissions.cn/cwu/>
- The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders & a Coalition of NGOs. (2014). *Civil society report submitted in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*. tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/.../INT_CEDAW_NGO_CHN_18362_E.pdf
- Tong, X. (2018). *Perceptions of the value of training, extent of involvement in corporate university programs, level of organizational commitment, and the accountability of a corporate university program as viewed by managers in china*. [Dissertation]. The iDEAL Dissertation Database.
- Tong, X., & Liu, A. (2014). 重视民主党派女性人才成长 [Focus more on the development of women talents among democratic parties]. http://www.mj.org.cn/mzzz/content/2014-06/05/content_145582.htm
- Tordesillas, C. (2015). *China pursues gender equality in college enrollment, forbids gender ratio*. <http://en.yibada.com>
- Treiman, D. J. (2013). Trends in educational attainment in China. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 45(3), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.2753/CSA2162-0555450301>
- Tsang, A. Y., Chan, P. S., & Zhang, L. (2011). Reconciling conflicts: The “accidental” women leaders in contemporary China. *Affilia*, 26(3), 314–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109911418441>
- Tsang, M. C. (2000). Education and national development in China since 1949: Oscillating policies and enduring dilemmas. *China Review*, 11, 579–618.
- Tung, R. L. (2002). Managing in Asia: Cross-cultural dimensions. In M. Warner & P. Joynt (Eds.), *Managing across cultures: Issues and perspectives*. Thomson Learning.

- United Nations. (2020). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>
- Vanderbroek, P. (2014). *Leadership strategies for women: Lessons from four queens on leadership and career development*. Springer.
- Vershinina, I., Kurbanov, A., & Panich, N. (2016). Foreign students in the Soviet Union and Modern Russia: Problems of adaptation and communication. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 236, 295–300. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.12.032>
- Wang, A. (2017). *Technical and vocational education in China: The characteristics of participants and their labor market returns*. Columbia University.
- Wang, J., & Shirmohammadi, M. (2016). Women leaders in China: Looking back and moving forward. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 137–151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641399>
- Wang, X. (2016). 团中央和教育部联合印发《高校共青团改革实施方案》成立省级共青团工作指委会 校级团委不得并入其他部门 [Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China and the Education Ministry collaboratively issued Implementation Scheme of University Communist Youth League Reform established province-level Communist Youth League work-guiding Committee: University-level league committee cannot be merged into other departments]. News.Xinhuanet.com
- World Bank. (2016). *Gross enrollment ratio, tertiary, gender parity index (GPI)*. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.TERT.FM.ZS/countries?page=1>
- World Bank. (2020). *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=CN>
- World Economic Forum. (2017a). *Five ways China's women are closing the gender gap*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/chinese-women-are-closing-the-gender-gap-heres-how/>
- World Economic Forum. (2017b). *The global gender gap report 2017*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf
- Woronov, T. W. (2007). Performing the nation: China's children as little red pioneers. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 80(3), 647–672.
- Xi, W. (2017). 中国教育部计划, 到2020年普及高中教育 [Plan of the China Ministry of Education: Popularize high school education by 2020]. <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/kejiaowen/nu-04072017120145.html>
- Xie, Y. (2017). 谢宇: 为什么女性的成就越来越高? [Xie, Yu: Why do women achieve increasingly highly?]. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/>
- Xu, J. (2016). *An example of Zhoushan village: Mainland China women's journey on pursuit of equality*. <http://www.xzbu.com/1/view-6836466.htm>

- Yale School of Management. (2020). *Women's Leadership Program*. Yale Center Beijing. <https://som.yale.edu/programs/executive-education/for-individuals/leadership/womens-leadership-program-yale-center-beijing>
- Yang, Y. (2018). *A who is who of women leaders in China's tech industry*. <https://www.scmp.com/tech/china-tech/article/2136271/whos-who-women-leaders-chinas-tech-industry>
- Zeng, B. (2014). Women's political participation in China: Improved or not? *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 15(1), 136–150.
- Zhang, H. (2016). 《女四书》：一锅精心熬制的“迷魂汤” [Four books for women: a wok of processed magic potion]. <http://paper.fnews.cc/content/2016-09/06/031386.html>
- Zhang, J. (2018). 中国最早四位女留学生的故事 [Stories of the four earliest Chinese ladies who studied abroad]. <https://www.jiemian.com/article/2039774.html>
- Zhang, T., & Zhao, M. (2006). Universalizing nine-year compulsory education for poverty reduction in rural China. *International Review of Education*, 52(3–4), 261–286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-006-0011-z>
- Zhang, Y. (2012). *Lessons for executive women from Chinese boardrooms*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeswomanfiles/2012/10/09/lessons-for-executive-women-from-chinese-boardrooms/>
- Zhao, J., & Jones, K. (2017). Women and leadership in higher education in China: Discourse and the discursive construction of identity. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(3), 21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7030021>
- Zheng, X., Wu, X., & Lin, S. (2020). 妇女与教育—我国教育性别平等的进程与反思 [Women and Education—Progress of and Reflection on Gender Equality in China]. *Journal of Shandong Women's University*, 34(6), 1–13.



Women Leaders in the Education Sector

Ying Feng^{id} and *Bo Fang*^{id}

WOMEN LEADERS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Leadership development is of great importance to the development of competent and excellent schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). In an earlier era, however, men dominated leadership development as reflected in the literature on educational administration, and research on women's leadership development has appeared only in the past two decades in China (Xie, 2009). In the following sections, we first introduced the context of women's development and education reform in China. We then provided descriptive information about where we are and what perhaps caused the absence of women school leaders, followed by a synthesis of characteristics of women school leaders and gender differences. Finally, we summarized the barriers to advancement noted in the literature with constructive observations. We also introduced informative case studies. At the end of

Y. Feng · B. Fang (✉)
University of Minnesota, Twin City, USA
e-mail: fang0297@umn.edu

Y. Feng
e-mail: fengx472@umn.edu

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature
Switzerland AG 2023

J. Ke and G. N. McLean (eds.), *Chinese Women in Leadership*,
Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68819-0_6

this chapter, we presented a discussion of the lenses used in approaching women's leadership development, along with recommendations for future research and practice.

CONTEXT MATTERS

In ancient China, the education sector was primarily dominated by men, as Confucian ideology promotes the notions that *nan zun nü bei* (men are superior to women), *nü zi wu cai bian shi de* (a woman without talent is virtuous), *san cong si de* (women need to obey their fathers before marriage, their husbands during marriage, and their sons during widowhood) (Liu, 2009). Given the traditional cultural heritage, Chinese women had little chance of receiving an education, let alone becoming leaders in the sector. In ancient China, some aristocratic families, intellectuals, and scholar-officials would allow their daughters to get an education, but these families would invite private tutors or erudite family members who were men to teach the girls at home, not at private schools (Cheng, 2019). This is similar to the situation in some western societies, where girls generally received education from governesses (Hardach-Pinke, 2010). Chinese history has witnessed some well-educated women, including those with outstanding achievements, such as Ban Zhao, the first woman historian of China, who is well known for her contribution to the development of the official history of the former Han Dynasty (CE 45–117), and Li Qingzhao (CE 1084–1155), who is often referred to as the greatest woman poet in Chinese history (Egan, 2013).

The concepts of women's rights and gender equity emerged after the First Opium War in 1840 (Li & Li, 2021), when China turned to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. The introduction of modern and western civilization in China included the advocacy of women's rights to receive an education. For example, the first women's school was built by western missionaries in 1844; later, there were 82 Christian women's schools and 29 boarding schools with a total of 2101 women and girl students by the 1890s. The situation has improved greatly. Since the beginning of the 1900s, educators and social reformers, such as Ma Junwu and Chen Duxiu, proposed women receiving education as a basis for women's rights and gender equity (Li & Li, 2021). The introduction of Marxism, along with the New Culture Movement and May Fourth Movement in the 1910s and 1920s, greatly promoted gender equality and feminism, advancing women's right to education, liberating women

from Confucianism suppression, and encouraging women to participate in the country's construction, even taking leadership roles (Chen, 2007). Between 1922 and 1947, the number of women students in college increased from 887 to 27,604, and the percentage of women students in college increased from 2.54 to 17.80% (Pan, 2001).

This period witnessed the emergence of the earliest women principals of primary and secondary schools and even universities in China. Wu Yifang (1893–1985), an alumna of the University of Michigan, became China's first prestigious women university president at the Ginling Women's College in 1928. Under her leadership, the college saw an expansion of rural social services and women's education. During the War Against Japanese Aggression (1937–1945), Wu worked with faculty and students to make the campus a shelter that protected over 10,000 Chinese women and children from atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers. The college where she served was also the first higher education institution to grant bachelor's degrees to women, educating many prominent women scientists and educators in China (Xiang, 2022).

EDUCATION REFORM AND WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN CHINA

Gender equity plays a critical role in women's leadership development, while women receiving education is a prerequisite for gender equity (Li & Li, 2021). Education policies and development in the People's Republic of China, established in 1949, set an important context for ensuring gender equality by protecting access to educational resources for women who have been disadvantaged (Jia, 2017). Education reform and development in China have been enhanced by national plans, laws, and policies, along with continuous investment, among other things. Since 1953, China has made long-term plans for national economic, education, and social development, once every five years, and has been working on them ever since. For example, one major objective of *the recent Five-Year Plan on the Development of National Education (2016–2020)* is to increase the female student enrolment numbers. In 2020, the enrolment numbers of students in China's pre-school, nine-year compulsory education, senior secondary education (including vocational secondary school), and higher education reached 45 million, 150 million, 40 million, and 38.5 million, respectively, with 46.94, 46.54, 44.35, and 51.55% of the students being girls and women. In addition to the national plans, a series of policies

and laws have been implemented, including the Compulsory Education Law and the National Policy of Gender Equality based on the proposal for the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (Jia, 2017). Furthermore, there have been continuing and increasing investments in school buildings and educational resources. For instance, the total spending on education in China was 5.3 trillion RMB (about 831.3 billion USD) in 2020, up 5.69% from 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Since the reform and opening up of the country in the 1980s, the illiteracy rate of women has significantly dropped from 48.86% in 1982 to 4.96% in 2021 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021). Notably, women receiving higher education vastly increased from 19.77% in 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, to 33.20% in 1976 with the resumption of the college entrance examinations after the Cultural Revolution, to 35.4% in 1995 with the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, to 51.55% in 2020 with an enrolment of 24,930,081 (Ministry of Education, 2021). We acknowledge that there has been a significant change in the number of women receiving higher education in the past 100 years in China, moving from having no rights to limited rights and opportunities, and then having equal rights to attend schools and receive education. However, Liu and Wang (2008) suggested that the increase was a reflection of family support, which has been vastly influenced by the single-child policy, and the imbalance of regional development favoring urban girls to go to schools and ignoring rural students of both genders. In conclusion, China has made progress in proposition and promotion of gender equality in educational opportunities in the past few decades despite the constraints on regional development, all of which provide the foundation for women's leadership development.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION

Development of educational leaders is of great importance to the development of excellent schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). In an earlier era, however, men were the primary focus of leadership development in the literature on educational administration, and the research on women's leadership development has only emerged in the past two decades in China (Xie, 2009). While achieving much in ensuring equal educational opportunities and gender equity, Chinese women have been underrepresented in leadership positions in the educational sector and are confronted

with many challenges and problems. In the following sections, we presented women's leadership development in education sectors in China in the following aspects: (a) education system in China, (b) documenting the absence of women principals, (c) synthesis of women educational leadership theories and models, (d) characteristics of women principals, and (e) identification of barriers viewing women leaders as disadvantaged.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CHINA

In China, K-12 education, or basic education, is divided into kindergarten/preschool, 9-year compulsory education (i.e., 6-year primary school and 3-year junior secondary school), and senior secondary education (i.e., 3-year senior secondary school or secondary vocational education). Specifically, K-12 in China has a variety of forms of educational structure, including those run by province-, city-, and country-level educational departments, local enterprises (e.g., private or public enterprise-affiliated kindergartens, Liu, 2018), public institutions, military institutions, communities, non-government, and Sino-foreign cooperation institutions as independent legal entities (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Higher education in China includes advanced vocational colleges, research and academic universities, applied technical institutes, and professional adult higher education schools (Ministry of Education, 2021). There are two personnel systems in Chinese colleges and universities: an administration system that includes program coordinator, academic advisor, and other administrative staff, and a teaching system that includes instructor, lecturer, and professor (Zhao & Jones, 2017). According to recent statistics from China's Ministry of Education (2021), there were 3012 higher education institutions with around 44.3 million students in mainland China. Of the 2.6 million faculty and staff in higher education, women staff were 50% of the total population, and women instructors and professors were 51.29% compared with 39.57 and 41.62% in 2001.

ABSENCE OF WOMEN PRINCIPALS IN K-12

According to the recent *Educational Statistics Yearbook of China* (Ministry of Education, 2021), the percentage of women kindergarten principals was 90%, while the percentage of full-time women teachers was 97.78%. There has been general consensus that it is easier for women to

be promoted into leadership positions in such women-dominated fields as preschool and kindergarten (Liu & Liu, 2015), however, the reality is women are underrepresented compared with the number of women teachers and staff members. Women are even more underrepresented in leadership positions in the rest of K-12 institutions (Wang, 2014). A recent study investigated primary and secondary school directors in the mid-west and east of China; it showed that the percentage of women directors was 45.3%; however, the average faculty size managed by women leaders was around 30–70 personnel compared with men leaders with faculty numbers of 71–150 (Zhang, 2014).

In recent years, the Chinese government has invested in multiple projects to increase the percentage of women principals in K-12. For example, one random survey of 50 secondary school principals in Guangxi province revealed that there were 18 women principals (9.47% of 190 such positions), whereas 13 of vice-principals were women (Li, 2009). To advocate for women leaders in K-12, China has partnered with Cambridge Education and the British Council since 2006 and launched many large education projects. For example, they invest in the South-western Basic Education Program (SBEP) in 27 of the poorest counties in four southwest provinces of China, with one of its major purposes being to increase the percentage of women principals and develop women's leadership in K-12 schools (Cambridge Education, 2021).

The absence of women principals is largely due to both political factors and Chinese cultural stereotypes. Specifically, the provincial and local Education Department, as a key environmental factor, plays a critical role in decision-making of school directors' promotions, as most Chinese public schools are run by these local government agencies (Zhang 2013). Wang (2014) and Zhang et al. (2013) noted that there is a lack of policy and motivation for education department to provide promotion opportunities and support the development of women leaders in schools. Further, women leaders are underrepresented in education departments even in well-developed coastal parts in Eastern China. For example, one survey of 182 education department directors in the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, and Shanghai, which are four of the more prosperous of China's provinces, showed that the percentage of women directors was 14.8% (Wu, 2008). These environmental factors limit the opportunities for women to be promoted as school leaders. On the other hand, women teachers have comparatively low willingness to sign up for managerial

position interviews and participate in leadership training and development programs (Zhang et al., 2013). In many ethnic minority communities and rural areas in China, women are especially in a very low status due to cultural and gender stereotypes that inhibit their willingness to become leaders in schools.

ABSENCE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

With the rapid development of social and economic development, the past two decades have witnessed an increased number and proportion of Chinese women in the higher education workforce (Liu, 2018; Wang & Yu, 2015). For instance, the percentage of women administrators and full-timer teachers increased from 42.33 and 41.16% in 2002 to 50 and 51.29% in 2020, respectively (Ministry of Education, 2021). As more women are breaking through the glass ceiling and climbing the organizational ladder, however, the proportion of women university leaders in higher education remains low in China, especially at higher levels, even though there is a broad gender balance in the higher education workforce, on average. Yang (2007) critiqued women having occupied a mere 4.5% of presidential positions in China's higher educational institutions.

In China, more than 70% of higher education institutions are managed by the Chinese government (Ministry of Education, 2021). As a result, a dual leadership structure exists in Chinese university governance in which the president-led administration team and secretary-led university Communist Party Committee serve as the top decision makers (O'Sullivan, 2020). Wang and Yu (2015) highlighted the phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in higher education leadership. There were 425 women senior administrators (10.7% of such positions) and 290 women senior Communist Party Committee leaders (13.9% of such positions) among 1166 higher education institutions. A recent study on women leaders in 272 higher education institutions found that there were 40 women secretaries and 115 deputy secretaries, accounting for 23% of the total number of secretaries, and 18 women presidents and 178 vice-presidents, accounting for 16% of the total number of presidents (Liu, 2018). Additionally, there were only 5 women presidents and 10 women secretaries among 75 top universities that are directly administrated and funded by the Ministry of Education (Jinan Times, 2021).

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDIES

Leadership development studies in education sectors in China are on the basis of western leadership theories in schooling (Liu & Liu, 2015), including Sergiovanni's (1984) five leadership forces model. Sergiovanni (1984) proposed the following fundamental aspects of leadership for school competence and excellence, namely technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural leadership forces. Specifically, the technical aspect emphasizes management skills and organizational development to enhance "planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling to the life of the school" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 46). The human aspect of leadership highlights the need of building "human relations, interpersonal competence, and instrumental motivational technologies" in order to provide support and encouragement, and thus "building and maintain moral and using such processes as participatory decision making" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 46). Educational leadership pays attention to the development of educational programming, curriculum design, teaching effectiveness and evaluation, and staff development (Sergiovanni, 1984). The symbolic and cultural leadership forces are critical to excellence in schooling, emphasizing aligned goals, values, and visions, and defining and developing cultural and unique identities of schools (Sergiovanni, 1984).

An example of a profound Chinese leadership competency model in education based on Sergiovanni's (1984) five forces model is Chen and Xu's (2009) principals' evaluation system in primary and secondary school. Chen and Xu (2009) identified roles and responsibilities that are essential to Chinese school principals' evaluation and leadership development. They proposed the following leadership measurements: value leader, educational leader, and organizational leader. Specifically, the value leader is expected to develop visions and goals, and build a learning culture and articulate unique campus traditions relevant to each context. The educational leaders emphasize the interaction between principals and teachers, including fair evaluation and equal opportunities for faculty development, mental and physical support, being moral, and the enhancement of effective teaching and research. The organizational leader highlights management techniques, human approaches, and coordination with the community and external resources. Similarly, Liu and Liu (2015) proposed four leadership forces model for kindergarten principals, namely value, human, educational, and organizational leader.

We noted that most leadership aspects in education theory are similar, while one unique leadership aspect in China's education sectors is building connections with external resources. On one hand, such connections emphasize alignment among school, family, and community educational resources (Chen & Xu, 2009). It also requires coordination among schools, education departments, and public images (Liu & Liu, 2015). On the other hand, it poses challenges and special issues for women leaders that will be discussed in further detail later in the text. While leadership research in China is still characterized by male dominance, there has been growing interest in research and practice on women's leadership development in education sectors in China (Zhang et al., 2013).

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHINA'S EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Gender differences exist in leadership behaviors and perspectives, and, therefore, it is important to expand theory and research to include the perspectives of nondominant groups in the field of educational leadership development (Hallinger et al., 2016). Various types of research identify the characteristics of women principals. However, these researches could potentially be influenced by gender-related personality theories, gender-free perspectives, or androcentric bias. We synthesized the findings and provided constructive criticism and reflection on this topic.

First, women principals in China's K-12 schools were widely considered to be human leaders and performing democratic leaders. Specifically, women principals tended to care about faculties' emotions and life and, therefore, provided appropriate support (Liu & Liu, 2015; Zeng, 2003). Unlike men principals, who tended to express will via executive orders, women principals tended to empower teachers, develop bonds among groups, and encourage their pursuit of personal growth (Lin & Teng, 2017; Zhang, 2010). Meta-analytic studies on gender differences in educational leadership suggested a leadership orientation among women principals as task-focused and democratic (Eagly & Carli, 2003), while exhibiting key features of instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Hallinger et al., 2016). Women principals consider being a leader a challenging job that can influence people through power, while men principals tend to believe that being a leader is a means to realize their own values and dreams (Bai, 2005). In addition, Bai (2005) and

Zeng (2003) also suggested that men leaders tend to favor overall interests over individual conditions and difficulties; while women principals pay more attention to communications, listen to the concerns of individuals, and consider individual situations in decision making. Women principals in China's K-12 tend to invite a variety of stakeholders to participate in the decision making, while male principals tend to make decisions based mainly on their own opinions and being democratic is one means of forming a decision.

Second, Zeng (2003) identified that women principals have more individual resilience and positive emotions than their male counterparts. When people experience positive emotions, they tend to have a momentary thought-action repertoire, which in turn helps to build enduring personal resources, including physical, intellectual, social, and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Suryaningtyas et al. (2019) confirmed that resilient leadership is strongly associated with organizational resilience, which is essential to allow organizations to respond and adapt to incremental change

Third, Lin and Teng (2017) noted that women principals often have keen intuition and detail-oriented, allowing them to make appropriate judgements that satisfy most stakeholders. Yet, Yu (2020) and Zhang (2010) proposed that such a detailed-driven style significantly impedes the strategic planning of the organization, which is one of the major reasons that women are better at being kindergarten and primary school principals rather than leaders in secondary and higher education institutions that require a holistic view of school development as men leaders. However, this perception may not be valid because such a conclusion was based on the observation of current male-dominated leadership experiences. We noted that women principals performed well in kindergarten and primary schools; however, this did not imply that women would fail in other leadership positions. In other words, such an observation should not speak for whether women can become leaders in higher education other than kindergarten and primary schools. These arguments reflect only the stereotypical view of women leaders in education through the lens of men.

Lastly, Yu (2020) argued that women leaders are not decisive enough because of gender-related personality attributes that often result in delays in decision making. Further, women leaders tend to be sensitive and suspicious, and thus, they lack trust in their subordinates and have disruptive

interpersonal relationships (Yu, 2020). However, we found these arguments to be flawed. First, gender-related personality theory and research have often been criticized in recent years due to a lack of consideration of social influences. As Stake and Eisele (2010) suggested, “Personality researchers seldom recognize or discuss how these gender differences may be influenced by the different social contexts men and women inhabit, which provide gendered reinforcement patterns, role models, and messages about appropriate behavior” (p. 20). Second, many of these arguments were not generated based on empirical studies. Without empirical evidence, it is difficult to determine if these arguments are valid.

CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES OF WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Chinese women principals face prejudices and challenges in various aspects, including local education departments and supervisors, the public, the family, the absence of women’s perspective in leadership theory, and the institutional barriers, among others. First, women principals in China have been facing challenges from department supervisors who play a critical role in decision-making for resource allocations and promotions. Many principals have limited authority in terms of curriculum design, staffing, and allocating resources due to the excessive authority/power of the administration or education department (Liu & Liu, 2015). It is especially difficult for women principals to gain support from the male-dominated education administration. The frequent site investigations by education departments and other local agencies are also noted as a burden to school directors (Li, 2009; Liu & Liu, 2015).

In addition, principals in China’s K-12 schools play an important role in communication and cooperation among departments for resources and support principals, which is especially difficult for women principals. Often times, such communication involves the Chinese drinking culture that, unlike freestyle drinking, is more controlled, ritualized, and purposeful (i.e., discussion of school issues over dinner and drinks). This posed challenges for women principals because women might have lower social status and be less comfortable in drinking in such situations. In addition, directors of education departments, especially for those who are in impoverished areas, have few motivations to promote women principals or provide opportunities to women teachers in leadership training (Cambridge Education, 2021). Significant prejudice remains

against women's ability and leadership based on gender and cultural stereotypes (Zhang et al., 2013). These stereotypes are deeply imbedded within traditional Chinese culture and remain significant and influential in the local supervisors and education departments in China.

The public is not advocating for women leaders in China. For example, Many Chinese women, especially those who live in rural and poor regions are afraid to be criticized by the public for behaving in a way that is against the expectations of the public of being maternal and nurturing (Zhang et al., 2013). Many people also feel intimidated in working with successful women leaders (Lin & Teng, 2017; Zeng, 2003). Consequently, women are less willing to become leaders, including not signing up for leadership positions, interviewing, and participating in leadership training programs (Zhang et al., 2013). Moreover, the public has different expectations and evaluations of men and women leaders even beyond variations in regional development. Specifically, when women principals display the same characteristics as men leaders, such as being brave, decisive, and accountable, they are labeled as *nü qiang ren* (super smart or strong women), but they are also viewed as harsh and unsympathetic (Zeng, 2003). Furthermore, that the public expects women leaders to have an attractive look and dress to enhance their charm and influence others (Lin & Teng, 2017). For example, Niu et al. (2018) and Li et al. (2020) investigated the prevalence of lookism across recruitment and promotion processes in the Chinese nursing and finance industries. While no studies have identified the impact of lookism on women's career and leadership development in the education sectors.

Family expectations driven by traditional Chinese culture also inhibit women's leadership development. Yang (2004) and Wang (2014) noticed the women principals were more willing to teach than taking leadership positions. In addition, they found that women principals attributed their success less to their capabilities and hard work, but more to luck. Work and life balance is a related challenge facing Chinese women principals caused by family expectations (Bai, 2005; Ma, 2015). Women principals often feel a conflict between career development and family responsibilities that, in turn, diminishes enthusiasm for work and family affection (Ma, 2015). Within traditional Chinese culture, the gender stereotype assumes that women are maternal and need to concentrate more on the family than is the case for their men counterparts. Women principals who play both roles are often overwhelmed with a heavy burden of work and family responsibilities that significantly weakens them in doing leadership

work (Liu, 2018; Wang & Yu, 2015; Zhang & Yan, 2016). Some evaluation policies for principals are based solely on the length of working hours, which is not fair or effective considering women's dual roles (Zeng, 2003).

Furthermore, the absence of women's perspectives and experiences in leadership theory and practice introduces significant invisible obstacles to women's leadership development. On one hand, existing educational leadership theory in China remains genderless and ignores the role and influence of gender in the construction of theory assuming no gender differences in human nature (Chen, 2014). However, as the genderless perspective supports the assumption that there is little difference between men and women in leadership, it is not necessary to include women's perspectives and experiences in leadership theories and practice. On the other hand, many arguments and findings have been generated based on an androcentric bias. The androcentric bias was proposed in the 1980s (Shakeshaft, 1989) as a translation of the Greek meaning man-centered partiality. Epp et al. (1994) suggested that "androcentric bias occurs when male experience is treated as the norm, whereas female realities are not considered or are relegated to the abnormal" (p. 451). Androcentric bias tends to reinforce the difficulties and barriers for women to become leaders because it contributes to the conception that women are not (or should not be) interested in administration, and thus discourages the willingness of both women and men to support women's leadership development (Shakeshaft et al., 2007).

In addition, women leaders face a range of additional institutional barriers that hinder their career and leadership development. The pervasive men-dominated networks restrict women from progressing to the top of the leadership ladder (Liu, 2018; Zhao & Jones, 2017). For example, men leaders have privileged access to promotions, while women leaders suffer from gender discrimination and social stereotypes that inhibit women in middle positions from moving into top-level leadership in higher education (Wang & Yu, 2015). Liu (2018), Wang and Yu (2015), and Zhang and Yan (2016) pointed out that there is notable gender segregation in higher education leadership in which women predominantly serve as leaders in university Communist Party Committees and occupy deputy positions, while men usually serve as senior leaders in academic and administrative systems. Thus, women are still marginalized and locked out of central positions of power in higher education. Although women have increasingly gained access to leadership in colleges and universities

over recent decades, women still face a narrow path of leadership development and are less represented at top levels of decision making in higher education than in other educational sectors.

CASE EXAMPLES

To illustrate in practice what is described above, we present three case examples, one at the high school level and two in higher education.

Principal Zhang Guimei and the Free Girls' High School

At China's National Poverty Alleviation Commendation in 2021 Zhang Guimei, the principal of Huaping Girls' High School in Yunnan province, attended the ceremony in a wheelchair, suffering from a variety of illnesses. In the 12 years since the school was founded in one of the poorest counties in China, it has helped more than 1800 impoverished girls escape the mountainous area, fulfilling the girls' college dreams. Passing the national college entrance examination for most people is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In 2020, Huaping Girls' High School achieved a college admissions rate of 94%. And the rate of the first batch of college admissions of 44%, an increase from 4.26% 10 years earlier. In the meantime, the rate of the first batch of college admissions in Yunnan Province was 6.9%. Principal Zhang used her own efforts to close the education gap between the small Huaping County and the urban cities. In comparison, the average rates of the first batch of college admissions in Beijing and Shanghai were 24.42 and 24.05% (IKM, 2019).

Principal Zhang came to the rural counties in Yunnan in the 1970s to support frontier construction after graduation and worked in a forestry bureau. She then transferred to be a teacher due to the extreme shortage of teachers in the school run by the Forestry Bureau, where she met her husband. Zhang Guimei had a happy marriage until 1995 when her husband died of cancer. In 1997, she was diagnosed with cancer. She decided to continue teaching as it was three months before the entrance examination, and nobody could fill it in. She ate only 5 yuan a day and used her salary to support students who could not afford tuition or learning supplies. Her students won first and second prizes in the provincial language competition, and second and third prizes in the National Physics Competition. The Huaping County Women's Federation was touched by her success and launched a fundraiser for her;

the county government funded her medical needs. She made up her mind to do her best to help the children receive an education. In 2001, she was appointed the headmaster of the Huaping Children's Home Orphanage. Since 2002, she has worked to build a free girls' high school to help less-educated mothers and therefore save poor children (Zhou, 2021). However, in five years, she was able to raise only about 10,000 yuan (about USD 1600) because Huaping County is impoverished. The education department had no funding to support building a free girls' school. "The people in the mountains are poor, because they are poor in consciousness and culturally backward especially for the girls who are in the very low status" (Lin et al., 2007, para. 14), Zhang Guimei told a journalist after she attended the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. After the article was published, it attracted widespread public attention leading to public and private funding to build the school.

Huaping Girls' High School was the first tuition-free girls' high school in China. Principal Zhang climbed the hills to recruit girls who were about to drop out of school. Many of the girls could not even understand the lecture. Most of the students failed to reach the scores of key local high schools, and some even scored 6 points out of 100 on the math test. Principal Zhang, therefore, adopted the cramming model and set strict rules. The children woke up at 5:30 a.m. and studied until midnight. To save time, they had to finish eating within 10 min and were not allowed to chat with each other (Zhou, 2021). For the past 12 years, Principal Zhang has lived in the dormitory of Huaping Girls' High School. In the morning, she got up before the students to wake students up; at night, she went to sleep after the students due to wrapping up work. She arranged her bed in the outermost part of the dormitory, so that she could be the first to react and protect her students in case of an emergency. Principal Zhang has been doing home visits and traveled over 110,000 kilometers over the past 12 years, while in most of the places she needed to climb over the mountains, where she broke a rib, lost her way, had a high fever, and fainted on the road when her old illness reappeared.

Principal Zhang has received polarized feedback. She said some students would jokingly call her the devil, while she is also the mother of many kids. More criticism about her schooling styles is teaching to the text which runs counter to the quality education reform, while also being defended by people who live in urban areas (Lian, 2020). Principal Zhang admitted that she's engaged in an intensive cramming model of learning as it is the only way to help impoverished students to seize the

opportunity to enter college and change their lives, as well as the lives of their families and impoverished areas. Principal Zhang is not only a human leader, but also a cultural and symbolic leader of the school. She has been seeking to define and articulate those values and beliefs that give Huaping Girls' High School its unique identity. Principal Zhang has strengthened the values and beliefs of gender equity in receiving education through hard work that has changed many people's mindsets and destiny. The high school enrolment rate in Huaping County was less than 50% before the Huaping Girls' High School was founded, surprisingly, it was increased to close to 90% by 2020 (Yang, 2021). This suggests that the Huaping Girls' High School and Principal Zhang helped more and more families and children (not only girls) in poverty to enter high school and receive advanced education.

OUTSTANDING WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite far fewer women than men in higher education presidential leadership, some women leaders have found ways of doing leadership and have had remarkable achievements. For example, Dr. Xie Xide, former president of Fudan University, was the first women university president since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Dr. Xie earned her Ph.D. degree in physics from MIT in 1951. After returning to her motherland, she taught in the Department of Physics at Fudan University and founded the Fudan Institute of Modern Physics and the Fudan Center for American Studies. During her presidency, Dr. Xie initiated institutional and curriculum reforms, promoted research innovation, and developed Fudan University's global partnerships in education and scientific research (Shao, 2009). Although struggling against cancer for 34 years, Dr. Xie devoted her life to China's modern physics education and made significant contributions to the development of Fudan University, now one of the top universities in China (Fudan University, 2021).

Wu Qidi, former president of Tongji University, promoted the merger of Tongji University with other higher education institutions and rebuilt Tongji Medical College. Under Wu's leadership, Tongji University was selected in Projects 211 and 985 (initiated by the Chinese government with the goal of building world-class higher educational institutions; see Zhang et al., 2013) to receive extensive financial support to improve campus infrastructure, teaching, and research and development.

Wu encouraged technical innovation through a university-corporation-government partnership that increased return on revenue for the university. She also fostered international collaboration on technology and engineering training and education between China and Germany (Gao, 2018). She was appointed as Vice Minister of Education for 5 years (2003–2008) after her presidency.

DISCUSSION

Traditional gender stereotypes rooted in Confucianism have greatly influenced Chinese society. The cultural concepts have shaped the nurturing role of women and their supposed characteristics in teaching, nursing, and care-oriented occupations (Barone, 2011; Hegewisch et al., 2010; Yi, 2006). Traditional normative conceptions of femininity (e.g., gentle, empathic, meticulous, and dedicated) constituted the education sector as a suitable field for women, and Chinese tend to believe that working in the education sector enables women to have more time and energy for family responsibilities (Chen, 2016). This may explain why there is a high percentage of woman teachers in primary and secondary education, with a continuously growing number of women faculty in Chinese universities (Ministry of Education, 2021). As cultural norms and gender stereotypes create the perception that leadership is congruent with masculinity and men-dominated roles, there is prejudice against women leaders. Leadership is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, but one reserved for women (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

Chinese women principals found it difficult to lead the same way as men do because of gender differences, sex stereotypes, and expectations as reviewed in this chapter. The interpretation of this argument would be much different if we adopted a different lens. If our observation and interpretation is through an inclusive or human perspective lens, rather than androcentric or genderless lens, then there will be a huge difference in how men and women are perceived to lead within educational leadership, yet both can be perceived as effective (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). An inclusive perspective allows women to be effective leaders even if they employ different strategies and leadership styles. Indeed, different lenses lead us to very different ways of developing women's leadership. However, whether our approach is androcentric or genderless is not wrong, but incomplete. We do need to reassess the existing studies and arguments about whether women are actually disadvantaged as leaders or whether that perspective

is due only to incomplete lenses used in defining what is right or wrong in leadership. Otherwise, the incomplete views would reinforce prejudice against women and women's leadership development. As Shakeshaft (1989) noted,

Science and science-making tend to reinforce and perpetuate dominate social values and concepts of reality... As a consequence, these outcomes have become the standards and norms by which all experience is measured and valued, with women as but one of the nondominant groups that have remained unrepresented. (p. 324)

We should identify our biases to become open-minded so as to include women's approaches and evaluate their impact on organizational behavior and effectiveness from an unbiased perspective.

In addition, with increased attention on gender differences in educational leadership research, a systematic view becomes increasingly important. The existing research on women's leadership characteristics, styles, and challenges reinforces the differences between men and women leaders in education (Ji, 2012). On one hand, there is limited analysis on the causes of such gender differences, such as the school's impact on women's leadership perspectives, experiences, behavior, and development. On the other hand, there is limited investigation on the effect women leaders have on the behavior and effectiveness of the schools they lead. Therefore, our exploration of women's leadership development should further contribute to the reconceptualization and theory building of leadership theories to include perspectives of both men and women and, therefore, improve educational leadership practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Most existing women's educational leadership research in Chinese literature focuses on documenting the absence of women leaders, synthesizing characteristics of women principals, and identifying barriers viewing women leaders as disadvantaged. While a small but growing body of work has focused on understanding women's perspectives on leadership development in China's education sectors. In this section, we present recommendations for future research on women's educational leadership in China.

First, the current literature on educational leadership is small-scale, fragmented, and exclusively focused on men's perspectives. There is little research on the androcentric bias in Chinese educational leadership literature (Chen, 2014; Ji, 2012). Therefore, future research on identifying gender stereotypes and androcentric bias and their influence in the existing literature is needed. Bias cannot be addressed unless it is identified (Hallinger et al., 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to encourage research on gender prejudice in men-dominated organizations and social networks that scrutinize women's physical appearance and attractiveness (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Specifically, future research should focus on the reassessment of educational leadership theory and research based on the observation of both men and women leaders. It is also important for future research to be more inclusive in problem identification, literature review, sample selection, data collection, interpretation of results, and the use of language in educational leadership research.

Furthermore, we call for further in-depth exploration of women's educational leadership development within China's education system and regional conditions. Many existing research studies lack rigorous research design (Ji, 2012). Much of the existing research on this topic remains descriptive rather than explanatory. Future research could investigate the contextual influences (e.g., social influences, regional development, organizational culture, and structure) on restricting women's leadership development.

Next, researchers may focus on the identification of the effects women's leadership has on organizational behavior, culture, and effectiveness, especially in developing leadership development programs. For example, there was a series of studies published based on SBEP between 2009 and 2015 (e.g., Zhang et al., 2013) that provide examples of research and practice in women's leadership development. Future research can identify the long-term effects of leadership development projects on organizational behavior and effectiveness, and the impact on regional development. Longitudinal studies can provide a deeper understanding of the contexts in which women's leadership functions (Kim & Chang, 2018) and promote a change in women's leadership development over time.

The literature reviewed for this chapter found that there was far less research published about women's leadership in higher education than in kindergarten, primary, and secondary education. More emphasis in

research, thus, is needed to focus on similar issues as found in the literature but at the higher education level. Finally, there was a paucity of statistics related to the issues of women's leadership at all levels of education. How many women are functioning in various levels of leadership across the education sector? How does this compare with men? How many women are in the various types of preparatory programs for educational leadership? How many women receive training for administration and what is the nature of the training? These gaps make current understanding of women's leadership in education difficult to understand.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Women's leadership development and education reform has been gaining more attention in recent years in China (Jia, 2017). Some projects launched by the education department and local governments have made a substantial contribution to the development of women leaders. Such agencies need to offer continuous collaborative leadership training and development programs for women teachers and school leaders. Because such training will motivate more and more women to participate in learning and performing school management. For example, the SBEP provided women's leadership development programs started in one county and later spread to four counties collaboratively (Cambridge Education, 2021). Such leadership training programs are especially important for women teachers in rural areas to have opportunities to develop leadership skills, prepare for mindset shifts, and exchange experiences during collaborative activities. The process of cooperation and networking from one county to multiple counties creates breakthrough space for supportive thoughts and behaviors, as well as innovation in problem solving and leadership development when they break away from the shackles of local culture and interpersonal relationships (Zhang et al., 2013). The leadership development program can also involve women trainees in the development of training plans as a means of empowerment and engagement.

Second, it is crucial to eliminate cultural and gender discrimination in order to improve the development of women's leadership in the education sector. We encourage Chinese education development to leverage social identities and gender education as a tool to promote gender equality in classrooms and in daily life as most of the challenges facing women's leadership development are rooted in the absence of education on cultural

and social gender consciousness (Chen, 2014). Specifically, we suggest offering courses on social identities and gender education classes in K-12, higher education, and community educational activities in order to create an inclusive mindset in Chinese society. These courses will also help women leaders to gain family support. Prior studies indicated that family support is also important for women to be fully prepared in taking leadership roles (Wang, 2014; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Therefore, a welcoming environment for women leaders within their families is necessary for women's leadership development.

In addition to these training courses, we suggest that Chinese policymakers and organizational leaders develop strategies and issue preferential policies to help women leaders attenuate work-family conflicts. For example, the Chinese University of Hong Kong has established lactation rooms on campus for women who need breastfeeding while working, and the university has provided women and women leaders with additional wellbeing benefits and flexible work accommodations (Xiong, 2020). Social identities, gender education, and preferential policies will inform people's mindset in understanding gender differences in leadership development and in appreciating the diversity, inclusiveness, and human perspectives in their lives.

CONCLUSION

While there has been an increase in women's educational leadership practices in China over the past two decades, there is still great opportunity for improvement. The country has witnessed incredible women leaders in its long history, but it still faces women's underrepresentation in leadership roles in the education sector. We anticipate that this chapter will be instructive in examining the history and development of research on women's educational leadership in China. We discussed nation-specific context factors, the synthesis of literature and statistics, the lenses of understanding women's leadership development in education, and informative case studies. We reviewed challenges facing women leaders in education in China based on an inclusive perspective; while some are caused by the education system or the status of regional development, others are caused by gender bias and stereotypes embedded in traditional culture. We highlighted the importance of being inclusive and open minded and included perspectives of both men and women in leadership development. As we look to the future, we see it as imperative to promote

awareness of gender equality, explore the developmental needs of women and women leaders, and provide more social, organizational, and family support to help women's leadership development.

REFERENCES

- Ayman, R., & Korabik, K. (2010). Leadership: Why gender and culture matter. *American Psychologist*, *65*(3), 157–170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018806>
- Bai, L. (2005). Investigation on the status quo of the image of female principals in decision-making. *Research in Educational Development*, *4*, 78–84.
- Barone, C. (2011). Some things never change: Gender segregation in higher education across eight nations and three decades. *Sociology of Education*, *84*(2), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040711402099>
- Cambridge Education. (2021). *Southwest basic education programme (SBEP), China*. <https://www.camb-ed.com/article/313/southwest-basic-education-programme-china>
- Chen, H. (2014). Principal research from the gender perspective: Importance and strategy. *Theory and Practice of Education*, *34*(43), 26–30.
- Chen, H. (2016). Is teacher a female-dominated occupation? *Zhongguo Jiaoyu Bao*. http://mgmt.cssn.cn/jyx/jyx_kspj/201605/t20160525_3022707.shtml
- Chen, J. (2007). *The history of education in modern China* (3rd ed.). People's Education Press.
- Chen, Y., & Xu, S. (2009). Research on professional evaluation of primary and middle school principals. *Journal of the Chinese Society of Education*, *1*, 41–44.
- Cheng, M. (2019). The cultural level of women in the Song dynasty. *Journal of Historical Science*, *6*, 34–49.
- Cheung, F. M., & Halpern, D. F. (2010). Women at the top: Powerful leaders define success as work + family in a culture of gender. *American Psychologist*, *65*(3), 182–193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017309>
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *Leadership Quarterly*, *14*(6), 807–834. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.004>
- Egan, R. (2013). *The burden of female talent: The poet Li Qingzhao and her history in China*. Harvard University Asia Center.
- Epp, J. R., Sackney, L. E., & Kustaski, J. M. (1994). Reassessing levels of androcentric bias in educational administration quarterly. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *30*(4), 451–471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X94030004004>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, *56*(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>

- Fudan University. (2021). *Xie Xide: A life of devotion is worth living*. <https://www.fudan.edu.cn/en/2021/0325/c344a108254/page.htm>
- Gao, Y. (2018). Interview with Professor Wu Qidi. *The Paper*. https://www.the-paper.cn/newsDetail_forward_2031054
- Hallinger, P., Dongyu, L., & Wang, W. C. (2016). Gender differences in instructional leadership: A meta-analytic review of studies using the principal instructional management rating scale. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(4), 567–601.
- Hardach-Pinke, I. (2010). Intercultural education by governesses (seventeenth to twentieth century). *Paedagogica Historica*, 46(6), 715–728. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2010.526332>
- Hegewisch, A., Liepmann, H., Hayes, J., & Hartmann, H. (2010). *Separate and not equal? Gender segregation in the labor market and the gender wage gap*. Institute for Women's Policy Research. <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C377.pdf>
- Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(2), 531–569. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24752863>
- IKM. (2019). *How hard is the China's College Entrance Examination (Gao Kao)?* <http://zh.innovationkm.com/?p=888>
- Ji, C. (2012). A review of the study on female education leaders. *Forum on Contemporary Education*, 6, 68–72. <https://doi.org/10.13694/j.cnki.ddjylt.2012.06.013>
- Jia, Y. (2017). Report on women's development in China in 2016. In P. Li, G. Chen, & Y. Zhang (Eds.), *Analysis and forecast of China's social conditions (2017)* (Vol. 6, pp. 385–404). Brill.
- Jinan Times. (2021). The ratio of male to female presidents of universities directly under the Ministry of Education is 70:5. *Jinan Times*. <http://www.sdjyxw.com/gn/28698.html>
- Kim, T., & Chang, J. (2018). Organizational culture and performance: A macro-level longitudinal study. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 40(1), 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-08-2018-0291>
- Li, C., Lin, A.-P., Lu, H., & Veenstra, K. (2020). Gender and beauty in the financial analyst profession: Evidence from the United States and China. *Review of Accounting Studies*, 25(4), 1230–1262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11142-020-09542-z>
- Li, J. (2009). Social sex consciousness and development of female primary and secondary school principals. *Education Exploration*, 8, 102–103.
- Li, X., & Li, A. (2021). Extrication and fetter: Feminist movement and enlightenment reason. *Journal of Changzhou University (Social Science Edition)*, 22(1), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.2095-042X.2021.01.011>

- Lian, Y. (2020). *Talk about Zhang Guimei: What is the real quality?* <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ZlfVtCEBYmxMT4PBbBPvGQ>
- Lin, H., Xu, J., & Zhang, X. (2007). *Interview with Zhang Guimei, a teacher of Huaping County Minority Middle School in Lijiang: I have a dream*. Xinhua Net. <http://news.sohu.com/20071014/n252644837.shtml>
- Lin, Z., & Teng, X. (2017). Research on female leaders in education sectors. *Kaoshi Zhoukan*, 76, 179–180.
- Liu, B. (2018). The development of female university presidents and female leaders. *China Women's News*. http://www.cssn.cn/shx/201809/t20180924_4568516.shtml
- Liu, L. (2009). On “a woman without talent is virtuous.” *Collection of Women's Studies*, 5, 55–60.
- Liu, L., & Liu, H. (2015). The status quo and the promotion strategy of the kindergarten directors' leadership under the background of the educational reform. *Modern Education Management*, 2, 81–86. <https://doi.org/10.16697/j.cnki.xdjygl.2015.02.005>
- Liu, Y., & Wang, Z. (2008). Women enter the elite group: Limited progress. *Journal of Higher Education*, 29(2), 49–61.
- Ma, S. (2015). Research on the characteristics and leadership style of female education leaders. *School Administration*, 7, 4–6.
- Ministry of Education. (2021). *Educational statistics yearbook of China: 2020*. China Statistics Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China. (2021). *China Statistical Yearbook 2021*. China Statistics Press.
- Niu, Y., Hirudayaraj, M., Sims, C. H., & Kawashima, Y. (2018). Lookism in the Chinese nursing industry: A content analysis of online recruitment advertisements. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, 19(2), 96–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10599231.2018.1453744>
- O'Sullivan, K. (2020). A dual system of Chinese university governance: Perceptions of employees and students. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 10(2), 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.9790/7388-1002032433>
- Pan, M. (2001). Women higher education: The thermometer of cultural transfer. *Journal of Jimei University*, 2(3), 1–6.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1984). Leadership and excellence in schooling. *Educational Leadership*, 41, 4–13.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). The gender gap in research in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 25(4), 324–337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X89025004002>
- Shakeshaft, C., Brown, G., Irby, B. J., Grogan, M., & Ballenger, J. (2007). Increasing gender equity in educational leadership. In S. S. Klein, B. Richardson, D. A. Grayson, L. H. Fox, C. Kramarae, D. S. Pollard, & C.

- A. Dwyer (Eds.), *Handbook for achieving gender equity through education* (pp. 103–129). Routledge.
- Shao, C. (2009). Xie Xide and her thoughts and practice in university management. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 3(2), 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.13316/j.cnki.jhem.2009.02.005>
- Stake, J. E., & Eisele, H. (2010). Gender and Personality. In J. C. Chrisler & D. R. McCreary (Eds.), *Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology* (pp. 19–40). Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1467-5_2
- Suryaningtyas, D., Sudiro, A., Eka, T. A., & Dodi, I. W. (2019). Organizational resilience and organizational performance: Examining the mediating roles of resilient leadership and organizational culture. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 18(2), 1–7.
- Wang, C. (2014). Promotion and training of female principals in primary and secondary schools: Based on UK-China southwestern basic education program. *Journal of Teaching and Management*, 6, 46–48.
- Wang, Y., & Yu, K. (2015). A survey of the female leaders of Chinese universities. *Fudan Education Forum*, 13(3), 21–26.
- Wu, J. (2008). A positive study of education bureau directors' leadership behavior in public governance perspectives. *Theory and Practice of Education*, 19, 16–19.
- Xiang, J. (2022). Dilemma and solution: From boudoir women to female presidents of universities—Educational investigation into the process of self-growth of 10 female presidents of modern universities in China. *Journal of Zhejiang Normal University (Social Sciences)*, 47(1), 100–106.
- Xie, H. (2009). *Female principals' leadership of junior high schools of Shanghai P District*. East China Normal University.
- Xiong, X. (2020). Improving women leadership: The structural challenge and women leadership in higher education. *China Women's News*. <http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/01/14/99188491.html>
- Yang, N. (2021). *The neglected starting line*. Weixin Official Accounts Platform. http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzU3MzgxMjI2Ng==&mid=2247488053&idx=1&sn=926b66df12e038d9bcddc139a4281099&chksm=fd3aa970ca4d20663b791349f10fe5a8146694ef31fe0a4d9563347b9eb50d6d09763c199548#rd
- Yang, X. (2007). The average age of university presidents in China is 52. *China Daily*. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqzg/2007-08/24/content_6039691.htm
- Yang, Y. (2004). *Study on development of female primary and secondary school principals*. Nanjing Normal University.
- Yi, Y. (2006). The primary connotation of Chinese traditional ethics on women. *Journal of China Women's University*, 18(3), 43–46. <https://doi.org/10.13277/j.cnki.jcwu.2006.03.010>

- Yu, W. (2020). The magnifying effect and elimination path of disadvantages of female leaders. *Leadership Science*, 3, 82–84.
- Zeng, Y. (2003). The superiorities and obstacles of female leaders in educational field. *Journal of Harbin University*, 24(9), 122–125.
- Zhang, L. (2014). Survey and analysis of gender differences of primary and secondary school principals. *Journal of Teaching and Management*, 27, 31–33.
- Zhang, X. (2010). Analysis on the phenomenon of women teaching and men management in school.pdf. *Research in Educational Development*, 8, 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.14121/j.cnki.1008-3855.2010.08.009>
- Zhang, L., & Yan, G. (2016). Career development and foresight of female rectors in global higher education institutes: An interview with chairperson Gülsün Sağlamer of EWRP. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 10(2), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.13316/j.cnki.jhem.20160223.001>
- Zhang, H., Patton, D., & Kenney, M. (2013). Building global-class universities: Assessing the impact of the 985 Project. *Research Policy*, 42(3), 765–775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2012.10.003>
- Zhao, J., & Jones, K. (2017). Women and leadership in higher education in China: Discourse and the discursive construction of identity. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(3), 21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7030021>
- Zhou, Y. (2021). *Zhang Guimei: A school principal who helps 1804 girls change their destiny*. <https://new.qq.com/omn/20210225/20210225A09JZY00.html>



Women Entrepreneurs in the Business Sector

Kai-wen Hsieh and Lianjuan Wang

Traditionally in the Confucianism culture, women in China are needed to take care of the family and usually do not engage in business deeply, but now women play an important role in business. Female TEA (% women) divided by male TEA (% men) in China is 0.84., far ahead of other Asian countries and is also a high percentage compared to other countries in the other part of the world (Bosma et al., 2020).

According to the Research institute Hurun 2019 (DATE), 9 of 10 of the world's richest self-made women billionaires are from China. This article explored the rise of the women entrepreneurs and the consequential individualization of society, which should be viewed as a reflexive part of China's state-sponsored quest for modernity.

K. Hsieh (✉)

Faculty of Engineering, Sanjo City University, Sanjo, Japan
e-mail: hsieh.kaiwen@sanjo-u.ac.jp

L. Wang

Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, Beijing, China
e-mail: wanglj@bupt.edu.cn

DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE BUSINESS IN CHINA

The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 as a socialist country. During the first thirty years, private firms and businesses were almost completely forbidden. The state-owned economy was driven by large-scale enterprises, some of which held monopoly advantages in industries.

The significant economic growth and entrepreneurship fad can be traced back to 1978 the Chinese Economic Reform and break into three different stages. Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government transitive to a market economy that has propelled its remarkable economic growth. The first wave of reforms and opening up of China's economy was under Deng Xiaoping spurred the vanguard generation of entrepreneurs at the end of the 1980s; the private firms and businesses began to develop due to the "open-door" policy. The first stage happened to be at the 1980s and early 90s, when the Chinese economic reform was still in its early developing stage, a lot of laws and rules were still incomplete, and people have giving up their stable jobs and entering entrepreneurship, which obtained a dramatic success. This created a favorable environment for entrepreneurship in China, initially characterized by small-scale business and self-employment. The second stage of development happened to be in the late 90s and early 2000, when there were more entrepreneurs who experienced or obtained a lot of information and communication technology from oversea. Those entrepreneurs then began imitating oversea business models into the Chinese market that shows a huge success. The well-known second-stage business companies are Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent. The third stage of development was based on those entrepreneurs who were born in the late 80s and 90s. The focus of their business model is more towards a long-term process with innovation based on cutting-edge technology (Yan, 2011).

In less than 40 years, China has finished the transition from one of the poorest countries to the second-largest economic entity in the world (Barboza, 2010). The private business activities were legalized in the Chinese Constitution in 1988, which makes it a fairly new area of opportunity (Kitching & Jackson, 2002). In the global entrepreneurship monitor 2014, entrepreneurship as a good career choice statistic that covered age from 18 to 65, China got a result of 65.7%, the USA got a result of 64.7% and Japan got a result of 31%. This showed that Chinese people are willing to accept entrepreneurship as a career. In the

past 30 years, China has come through a dramatic economic growth that produced a lot of successful entrepreneurs and millionaires.

Yet individuals in China also live in an environment where a fluid labor market, flexible employment, increasing risks, a culture of intimacy and self-expression, a society that greatly emphasizes on individual responsibility and self-reliance that is created by the globalization of the market economy and an ideology of consumerism (see Yan, 2010). The private sector has made a significant contribution to the country's economic development. The number of registered private enterprises reached 35.16 million and they have created 228.33 million jobs by the end of 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020).

From 1980 to 2018 the growth rate of China's GDP we can tell there was a dramatic growth, furthermore the past research had proved that GDP growth rate is a positive factor in the creation of new businesses. There is a relationship between GDP growth and start-up rate (Carree et al., 2002).

China has seen great economic development during the last decades and its economy is already the second-biggest economy in the world (only after US). The country itself is big both in the area and in population, which has invested a lot in the economic development and turn a new page also in private firms. Its ambitions and goals highlight the importance of entrepreneurship and startups and there is support to develop China's economy. Start-up ratios can be affected by GDP growth. It can be seen in Fig. 7.1 that the GDP growth rate is an important factor in new firm formation for all industries.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN CHINA

In China, the social system has long been regarded as patriarchal in which the male head of the household (presumable breadwinners) holds extensive authority over women and younger family members (Thornton & Lin, 1994). Confucianism emphasized filial piety of children toward parents; children have responsibility and obligation to respect, be obedient, and take care of their parents. Daughters usually had relatively lower status inside the family, because once they got married, they are supposed to leave for their husband's home, and take care of the husband's parents including other family members. Therefore, traditionally daughters obtained less investment for their future education and also did not have inheritance right (Attané, 2009; Ebenstein & Leung, 2010).



Fig. 7.1 China Real GDP Growth 1980–2018 (*Data Source* IMF “World Economic Outlook Database” [2019])

However, in pre-modern China, female women were considered to be inferior to male and were on the bottom rungs of the society. Confucianism dictates that women must be subservient and obey their father, husband, and son, which requires a lot of time to taking care of the whole family. Thus, that is why companies are reluctant to hire female worker or less likely to promote them to a higher position.

For instance, there has been no woman representational among the nine members of China’s top-level of decision-making, the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party. Since the establishment of the PRC there is only 12% of female women who hold ministerial positions in government, and there has been only one female woman head of state (Li Bin, 2043–2018) in the past 50 years (The World Economic Forum, 2015). In business settings, only 18% of firms in China have women as top managers, and women were represented in only 10.7% of boards and 3.2% of CEOs of companies (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014).

One-Child Policy

The One-Child Policy was issued in 1980, initially designed as a temporary measure to curb a surging population, this policy directly changed the average family size, and also changed the role of women, both inside

and outside the family. One-child policy regulated that, in principle, each urban couple can only have one child, however, the number of children that rural couples can have varied by provinces, ranged from one (in most coast provinces) to two children, including so-called 1.5 children (Attané, 2002). Although the Chinese government relaxed the family planning policy in 2015 by allowing two children for each couple, there is no doubt that family planning policy in the recent 30 years has directly changed the patterns of Chinese families (Wang, 2006).

One effect of the policy is that women were released from the burden of reproduction and thus able to devote more time and energy to other matters. Another effect of the policy was that children are assigned more resources per family, as the total number of children within a household reduces. In effect, the policy built a better nurturing system for women through improved health care and education. In addition, the pool of successors in family business shrunk, leaving families with no option but to consider daughters as potential candidates, while, importantly, adult women's careers no longer suffered through frequent childbirth.

One of the unexpected outcomes of family planning policy might be the empowerment of daughters (Fong, 2002; Tsui & Rich, 2002), especially for urban daughters. As the only child, urban daughters have no siblings to compete for family resources. Also, parents who only have daughters have no choice but to rely on daughters to carry on family responsibilities, aging care when they get old. Research even finds that, parents with daughters-as-only-children invested more in children's education than parents with sons-as-only children (Tsui & Rich, 2002).

In general, having fewer children have a positive effect on gender equality. On the other hand, Women as mothers were relieved from continuing childbirth and child-raising, and could spend more time and energy on personal interest and development, that is one of the reasons why there are more female entrepreneurs in the society.

Female Students Enrolled

The importance of understanding the determinants of women entrepreneurs should be obvious. Armington and Acs (2002) examined the role of human capital, training and education and entrepreneurial environment on new enterprises formation and emphasized that industrial density, population and income growth are the main factors to the different regional new enterprises formations. Another even stronger

Table 7.1 Percentage of female students enrolled (%)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Master program</i>	<i>Ph.D. program</i>	<i>Graduate school (Master + Ph.D.)</i>
1980	11.8	–	–
1985	16.5	8.2	14.5
1995	32.6	15.5	27.6
2000	36.2	24	33.6
2005	46	32.6	43.4
2010	50.4	35.5	47.9
2015	52.2	37.9	49.7
2019	52.2	41.3	48.5

Data Educational Statistical Yearbook of China (1995–2015); China Statistical Yearbook (2020), compiled by National Bureau of Statistics of China; Statistics of Chinese women (1949–1989), compiled by All-China Women’s Federation

evidence is reflected by the enrollment of higher education (Table 7.1). Education cannot only challenge gender stereotypes but provide exposure to egalitarian ideas. Despite considerable progress in approaching a goal of gender equality in education, there is only limited advancement in making education a resource for transforming gendered social system and gender roles (Yamane & Ook, 2008). From 1995 to 2015, the percentage of female students in higher education quickly caught up. Currently, there are more female students than male students studying in master programs in graduate school. Although the number of female Ph.D. students is still less than that of male Ph.D. students, the percentage of female Ph.D. students has increased more than twice between 1995–2015. Considering the outnumbering of male over female in the young cohorts because of the unbalanced sex ratio (Yuan, 2007).

Support from the Family

Confucianism emphasized filial piety of children toward parents, and the children have responsibility and obligation to respect, be obedient to, and take care of their parents. On the one hand, when a daughter got married, she became wife and must show respect to her parents-in-law. The traditional family relationship emphasizes strong intergenerational ties and mutual support among family members.

However, when the young couples give birth to babies, many of them would ask help from their parents for childcare. During the childcare

period, either the couple's parents join them, forming a cooperating family. The parents would also hope they can help their children on developing their business, other than help in childcare to provide their child to have more time on developing their business, but also parents would want to financially support their children on developing business. After all, parents feel proud to see their children getting success in their business, furthermore, if one day parents end up living with their children, they can also receive better care.

Example 1, Dong Mingzhu is a Chinese outstanding female entrepreneur, who succeeds under the support of her family. She was born in August 1954 in Jiangsu Nanjing, graduated from Anhui Wuhu Vocational and Technical College, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law EMBA2008 level, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences graduate class, CEIBS EMBA.

In 1984 her husband passed away, and at the time, her children were still 2 years old. This event became a turning point in her life. In 1990 she let her mother take care of her children and started the business from nothing. In 1990 She started to work at Gree when she was in her middle age, she began her work as a seller, and until now, she has become the owner of Gree and built Gree as a world-class brand. She won the "2016 ten annual economic figures". And ranked 2017 China's most outstanding business women ranked first. This is a success female entrepreneur example that is built under the traditional Confucianism thoughts and the support of family. One of the key factors that have made the female entrepreneurs become successful, is the support from their parents.

Businesses headed by women tend to be less likely to be externally financed, and are often financed through associating with other family members (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Female leaders are less likely to utilize the formal and external network; they often attempt to make better use of family human resources meaning kinship becomes vitally important as a resource in the organization. Thus, the family system may become a natural source supporting the female-led family business.

WOMEN SUCCESSORS OF FAMILY BUSINESSES

A recent analysis by Ernest Young (2017) shows that 70% of family businesses are considering a woman for their next CEO. A contemporary research shows that nearly one-third of family businesses in China have a

female successor, institutional change in contemporary China affects the role of female family members in the family system, which eventually gave rise to female leadership in China's family businesses. (Chen et al., 2018).

China's private enterprises have accounted for almost 94%, and its number is 1.98 million in 2019 (China Statistical Yearbook, 2020). Most private enterprises are owned by an owner or a family. When the owner is old, a succession problem is emerging. By the end of December 31, 2016, the number of A-share listed family enterprises accounted for 56.35% of the total number of private listed companies (Zhu & Liu, 2019). According to the "Survey Report on Modern Family Businesses in China" released by Forbes China in September 2015, among 884 family businesses listed in the A-share market, 486 (54.9%) of them have one or two generations working at the same period in the business. Among them, 111 family enterprises (accounting for 12.5%) have been completely replaced by the second generation, and with the adjustment of industrial structure and economic transformation and upgrading, the pace of succession of the second generation is gradually accelerating (Zhu et al., 2018).

Family businesses in which daughter is the only child in the family are more likely to consider the daughters as the successors of the businesses because of the one-child policy. Examples include Huiyan Yang, Deputy Chair of the Board of Country Garden, which was listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in 2007 with 205 billion yuan (about 31 billion USD) in total market value in 2021; Fuli Zong, the future successor of Wahaha, a large food and beverage corporation with an aggregate of 30,000 employees and 40 billion yuan (about 6 billion USD) of total asset; and Chang Liu, the future successor of New Hope Group, which has nearly 70,000 employees and annual revenues of nearly 80 billion Yuan (about 12 billion USD).

Women successors in Chinese family businesses were likely to obtain their position as the only available option to continue the family legacy due to the Chinese tradition of "transferring the leadership from fathers to sons" and China's one-child policy. Women usually are not considered to be successors in Chinese family due to the tradition of Confucianism. In ancient time, the daughter is considered as the person belonging to the husband's family. The wealth, land, or other important family fortune would be handed down to the son, even to the daughter-in-law, but not to the daughter. But because of China's one-child policy, daughters as the only child are likely to be considered as the successors in family business

because the family wants to hand the business to the family members not an outsider.

Although both women successors and women entrepreneurs are leaders in corporations, the former is different from the latter in many ways. Women successors may have a high starting point in their career development because they take the corporation from their parents, but may face more problems after they take their position. Tan (2008) argued that China still operated under a strongly male-dominated business culture associated with Confucianism and that women entrepreneurs were likely to face conflicts with their parents due to generational differences in social expectations.

Daughters have to confront unique challenges when taking over a family business, often facing discrimination and stereotyping as a result of societal prejudices and family hierarchies (Parada & Dawson, 2017). Women have to establish new identities to be accepted as leaders by both the family and the business. The succession of women in family businesses is inextricably linked to their own personal path toward leadership (Dalpiaz, Tracey, & Phillips, 2014). Daughters may face many obstacles when they enter the family businesses, including the father–daughter relationship, the employee’s acceptance, and respect. Father’s behavior, and especially switches from professional to a “daddy’s-little-girl” attitude, can create conflicts, confusion and tensions that make it difficult for the daughter to establish her own identity (Dumas, 1992). The construction of the self as close to or distant from the father’s leadership style and whether the daughter’s leadership succession was accepted by or imposed on the firm’s employees allowed different self-positioning to emerge, strengthening the vision of “doing gender” as a process embedded in social relationships, rather than a static construct tied to stereotypes and labels (Mussolino et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Since China opened up in 1978, the Chinese policy encourage to develop private sector of business and the country began to integrate into the global economy. The numbers and the scale of private businesses increased dramatically. The positive contribution of new enterprises to economic development has mostly been discussed under the heading of competition. China society is changing dramatically, and private business is a new competitive field of opportunities for both women and men

in China. The economic growth in China has led to an entrepreneurship wave, which is providing entrepreneurs with more entrepreneurial opportunities.

The literature suggests that new enterprises make a significant contribution to the creation of new jobs, to the promotion of economic growth. However, the One-Child Policy finding is that to cope with the scarcity of resources, the One-Child Policy was introduced to curb birth rates, leading to the release of capable females in the job market as well as more resources distributed to each family member regardless of their gender. One of the obvious changes happened to families Chinese might be the role of daughters. As family size reduces and many families have at most two children, daughters become more valuable. They first achieved the equality in education. Currently, among the young cohort, women almost caught up with men in educational attainment. Secondly, even when the daughter is already married, her parent will still continuously support her, from any of the housework and childcare of their grandchildren to the financial support. Daughters have played more important roles than before in taking care of their parents. Thirdly Most of the incumbents want to hand the business to an insider in the family other than an outsider, women successors become the incumbent's favorite choice because of the One-Child Policy.

These factors will lead to the institutional change in contemporary China which affects the role of female family members in the family system and eventually gave rise to female leadership in China's family businesses.

REFERENCES


- Amington, C., & Acs, Z. J. (2002). The determinants of regional variation in new firm formation. *Regional Studies*, 36(1), 33–45.
- Attané, I. (2009). The determinants of discrimination against daughters in China: Evidence from a provincial level analysis. *Population Studies*, 63(1), 87–102.
- Barboza, D. (2010, August). China passes Japan as second-largest economy. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html?pagewanted=all>
- Bosma, N., Hill, S., Ionescu-Somers, A., Kelley, D., Levie, J., & Tarnawa, A. (2020). Global entrepreneurship monitor: 2020 Global Report. <http://www.gemconsortium.org/report>
- Carree, M., van Stel, A., Thurik, R., & Wennekers, S. (2002). Economic development and business ownership: An analysis using data go 23 OECD

- countries in the period 1976–1996. *Small Business Economics*, 19(3), 271–290.
- Chen, S., Fang, H. C., MacKenzie, N. G., et al. (2018). Female leadership in contemporary Chinese family firms. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 35(1), 181–211.
- Cho, Y., Ghosh, R., Sun, J. Y., & McLean, G. N., (2017). *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership: A cross-cultural analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54996-5>
- Ebenstein, A., & Leung, S. (2010). Son preference and access to social Insurance: Evidence from China’s Rural Pension Program. *Population and Development Review*, 36(1), 47–70.
- Fong, V. L. (2002). China’s one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters. *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), 1098–1109.
- Jennings, J. E., & Brush, C. G. (2013). Research on women entrepreneurs: Challenges to (and from) the broader entrepreneurship literature? *The Academy of Management Annals*, 7(1), 663–715.
- Kitching, B. & Jackson, P. (2002). Female entrepreneurs in a transitional economy. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 3(2), (145–155).
- Mari, Y., & Hong, S. O. (2008). A comparative study of childcare and motherhood in South Korea and Japan. In *Asia’s new mothers*. Brill.
- Ming, T., & Rich, L. (2002). The only child and educational opportunity for girls in urban China. *Gender and Society*, 16(1), 74–92.
- Mussolino, D., Cicellinb, M., Iaconoc, M. P., Consigliob, S., & Martinez, M. (2019). Daughters’ self-positioning in family business succession: A narrative inquiry. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 10(2), 72–86.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China (2020). *China statistical yearbook 2020*. China Statistics Press.
- Ochiai, E., & Molony, B. (2008). Asia’s new mothers: Crafting gender roles and childcare networks in East and Southeast Asian societies. In E. Ochiai & B. Molony (Eds.), *Folkestone: Global oriental* (pp. 71–87). Wiley.
- Parada, M. J. & Dawson, A. (2017). Building family business identity through transgenerational narratives, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 30(3), 344–356.
- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). Women in leadership in contemporary China: Past, present, and future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Current perspectives on Asian women in leadership: A cross-cultural analysis* (pp. 19–35). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Tan, J. (2008). Breaking the “bamboo curtain” and the “glass ceiling”: The experience of women entrepreneurs in high-tech industries in an emerging market, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80, 547–564.

- Thornton, A., & Lin, H. S. (1994). Social Change and the Family in Taiwan. *University of Chicago Press Economics Books*, 26(1), 76.
- Tsui, M., & Rich, L. (2002). The Only Child and Educational Opportunity for Girls in Urban China, *Gender and Society*, 16(1), 74–92.
- Wang, Y. S. (2006). An analysis of family structure in contemporary China. *Social Science in China*, 1, 97–108.
- Yan, Y. (2010). Introduction: Conflicting images of the individual and contested process of individualization. In M. H. Hansen & R. Svarverud (Eds.), *China: The rise of the individual in modern Chinese society*. NIAS Press.
- Yan, Y. (2011). The individualization of the family in rural China. *Boundary 2*, 38(1), 203–229
- Young, E. (2017). *Women in leadership: The family business advantage*. Family Business Center of Excellence.
- Zhu, X. W., & Liu, C. J. (2019). Cultivating successors of the family firm: Overseas training or domestic training. *Economic Research Journal*, 1, 68–84.
- Zhu, Z. D., Li, X. C., & Ye, W. P. (2018). More than promotion: An empirical study of intergenerational succession and strategic Change from the perspective of paternalism. *Management World*, 11, 65–79.



Women's Participation in the Government Sector

Taylor Jing Tian and Jessica Li 

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Women's participation in a nation's political structure is considered a symbol of gender equality and social advancement (Xu et al., 2021). During the past decades, China has made substantial efforts to promote women into leadership positions in government sectors. As a result, the number of women leaders in state, provincial, and township government offices has increased. However, the proportion of women leaders in the highest level of government offices remains small (Zeng, 2014). Moreover, Chinese women are still experiencing various obstacles that

T. J. Tian (✉)

Office of International Engagement, Illinois State University, Illinois, USA
e-mail: jtian13@ilstu.edu

J. Li

College of Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA
e-mail: jli2011@illinois.edu

prevent them from pursuing equal participation in public and political affairs (Zhou, 2003). Here, we review and synthesize the current status of Chinese women's participation in the country's governing structure, analyze the causes of the underrepresentation of women leaders in government sectors, and offer insights and recommendations for future women's leadership development in government offices.

Previous studies have provided an overview of Chinese political structure (e.g., Chen, 2016a, b; Reuvid, 2008). The National People's Congress (NPC) is the highest legislative body that functions as a parliament to exercise congressional authority. The responsibilities of the NPC include making laws, amending and approving the constitution, overseeing constitutional agencies, and implementing and evaluating major national policy decisions (Chen, 2016a, b). Leading by a standing committee, the delegates of NPC, who are elected for a five-year term, meet annually to evaluate law and policies, assess political decisions, and deliberate plans concerning both domestic and external affairs (Reuvid, 2008). As the country's chief legislature, the NPC also elects the President of the country—the highest political leader and other top-level government officials (Chen, 2016a, b; Li, 2016).

This congressional structure is mirrored in the next level of local governance (Reuvid, 2008). In China, the principal administrative divisions are provincial and independent administrative regions, which include autonomous regions (e.g., Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region), municipalities (e.g., Beijing and Tianjin), and special administrative regions (e.g., Macau). Each of these provinces and regions has its local congress and standing committee to govern policies and make decisions regarding local legislative matters.

Another political institution in China is the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). It brings together a wide range of non-political associations, organizations, and non-government entities that are supposedly not associated with the ruling political party, the Communist Party of China (CPC; Li, 2016; Tiezzi, 2021). Similar to the elective process for selecting the delegates of the NPC, the delegates of the CPPCC are elected through local elections. The CPPCC is tasked to provide advice and suggestions to the central government on issues of concern raised by non-CPC groups during annual meetings. Like the NPC, a standing committee is formed to lead the CPPCC. In addition, the provincial- and county-level CPPCC committees are responsible for recommending changes to resolve regional issues.

The national administrative power resides in the State Council, led by the country's Premier. Under the leadership of a 10-person standing committee, the State Council executes the administrative functions of the government through its ministries and commissions. The members of this 10-person standing committee consist of the Premier, four Vice Premiers, and five State Councilors. One of the Councilors also serves as the Secretary-General of the State Council. As the top executive branch, the State Council coordinates government agendas, proposes and implements initiatives for national development, and oversees provincial governments (Yi-chong & Weller, 2016). Other top administrative units include the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Central Military Commission (Reuvid, 2008). At the local level, the executive functions are enacted through provincial, municipal, county, and township governments.

The CPC has been the single ruling political party since the founding of the PRC in 1949. The paramount roles of the CPC are reflected in its high-profile authority of heading and guiding all political entities (Yi-chong & Weller, 2016). The Politburo of the CPC plays the most critical role in making the nation's top political decisions (Chen, 2016a, b). Headed by a seven-person standing committee, the Politburo has 25 members, all of whom are the highest-ranking leaders in the Chinese government (Yi-chong & Weller, 2016). Therefore, the Politburo is considered the highest decision-making group of the most powerful political elites in China (Fu et al., 2018).

The Chinese government and public administration operate in a dual system that consists of both the CPC committees and the administrative functions. The CPC committee within the government exerts the highest political authority, and the Secretary of the CPC committee assumes superiority in the office (Bai & Liu, 2020). For example, a provincial government has an administrative and executive branch, which the governor heads, who is also under the leadership of the Secretary of the CPC committee of the province. A similar dual leadership structure exists at each county, township, and village level government office.

China's political and government systems have distinctive characteristics. Overall, the Politburo exercises the CPC leadership at the state level, and the CPC committees exercise leadership at the regional level. Non-CPC groups can cast an influence on policies through the CPPCC. Next, we provide a review of women's participation in the political system in China.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINESE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

During the past few centuries, political movements and social events have led to the evolution and stabilization of the Chinese political structure and resulted in changes in women's roles in government sectors. This section discusses how women's political participation and leadership roles veered through three important historical eras:

- The Imperial Dynasties of China
- The Period of Republic of China
- The Present People's Republic of China (PRC).

The Imperial Dynasties (Prior to 1912 CE)

From approximately 221 BCE to 1912 CE, China was governed by a monarchy with the emperor at the top of the power structure. This imperial system was extremely centralized and hierarchical as the emperors held sovereignty and dictatorial authority above all. As a result, those with family or clique connections to the emperors benefited from socio-economic privileges. In contrast, others often experienced hardship to maintain self-sufficiency in society by themselves.

During the imperial dynasties, gender discrimination was immensely institutionalized. The successors of emperors were only chosen from the men of the royal family, such as the emperors' sons, brothers, uncles, or other men relatives. Women's role was vastly constrained within household responsibilities, and their participation in political and public affairs was completely forbidden. Women were only allowed to perform domestic duties for their family as a daughter, a wife, and a mother, and they were expected to physically stay at home and follow directions from the man figures in their life, for example, their father (before they got married), husband, and adult son(s) (Du, 2016; Mun, 2015). Most school-age girls were not given the opportunity to receive proper education or enter the workforce when they grew up. Instead, they were confined in their home, learning to become an attentive homemaker and an obedient caretaker. Arranged marriage was widespread during that time. After marriage, women were obligated to raise children, take care of the elderly, prepare meals for their family, and do everything their husbands and older family members requested.

Given the cultural and social environment in imperial China, women were not recognized for their talents and abilities outside of household tasks. As a result, they could hardly be in leadership positions of any kind for thousands of years (McMahon, 2013). Two distinguishable exceptions in recorded history were Wu Zetian, the only female emperor in China, who governed the country from 690 to 705 CE during the self-established Zhou Dynasty (McMahon, 2013; Peng et al., 2015), and Ci Xi, who took over the control of the government from 1861 to 1908 CE in the late Qing Dynasty. In both cases, Wu Zetian and Ci Xi were widowed and became Empress Dowagers by the death of their husbands. They gained power because the succeeding emperors were under their care and too young to perform governing duties.

The Period of Republic of China (1912–1949 CE)

This period marked the ending of the imperial dynasties in China. Starting in 1912 CE, China began to exit the imperial sovereignty and transitioned to establishing a republic country. Feudalism and the crumbling imperial government structure were overthrown (1927–1937 CE). From 1937 to 1949 CE, Chinese people endured the trauma of various domestic unrests and international invasions, including the Sino-Japanese war that resulted in millions of casualties in China and the civil war that occurred between 1945 and 1949 CE. Filled with turmoil and upheavals, this era had revolutionized the Chinese political system and transformed almost all aspects of society.

The Qing Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty. In the last few decades of the Qing Dynasty, Chinese people, especially those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, had long suffered from the oppression and ineffectiveness of the corrupted Qing government. Moreover, people's lives became much worse due to the "close-door" national policy imposed by the government at the end of the Qing dynasty. This policy caused the economy to plummet by limiting international trade with foreign companies and customers, stagnating technology advancement, and bankrupting many domestic businesses. At the same time, many western countries experienced rapid economic growth resulting from the Industrial Revolution. As a result, the outdated Qing government's military defense system and national security infrastructures were shattered after many wars against foreign invaders.

The pinnacle of social revolutions during this period was the May Fourth Movement (五四运动). It was ignited by people with aggravated frustration, dissatisfaction, and exasperation toward the government. These people longed for a modernized country with reformed social values and culture and a much more effective and efficient administration to lead the country (Changli, 2010). During this movement, women's liberation was declared and advocated. With such movements quickly expanding and spreading across the country, many fought for women's rights and equal participation in economic and political activities (Hasija, 2013). Repudiation and denial of women's civil rights were criticized and challenged, and feminism was introduced to China from the West (Zhou, 2003). Schools and colleges were built to provide education for women students (Lianfen, 2012). More and more women writers and social activists emerged during this period. Pro-women organizations mushroomed to support women in pursuing a meaningful career and obtaining financial independence. In later wartimes, many women fought at the frontline, on the battlefield, and made extraordinary contributions to establishing the PRC alongside their male peers.

The impacts of these social movements and wars were profoundly transformative. However, the overall societal environment and the deep-rooted patriarchal doctrines still impeded women from taking leadership positions in governmental and political offices. Altogether, women's liberation was not entirely achieved (Zhou, 2003). Insufficient representation of women in government sectors continued.

The Period of People's Republic of China (1949 CE—Present)

In 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded under the leadership of the CPC. Since its founding, China has prioritized expanding women's participation in all economic and social activities. As a result, women employees appeared in various occupations traditionally held by men, and women leaders debuted in local government offices (Hu, 2016).

During the 1960s and 1970s, China underwent another chaotic phase, represented by the Cultural Revolution. Traditional culture and beliefs were scrutinized, and family structure was shaken. Gender equality was elevated in an unprecedented fashion to overturn the traditional patriarchal family and social system. Women were seen as valuable assets during the societal uproar. During this time, many women seized the opportunity

to become political leaders. In the late 1970s, when the social unsettlement was finally ceased, the country started a period of economic and political recovery and stabilization.

Moving forward to the late 1980s, the Ministry of Personnel in China published a series of policies to advocate for women leaders in government sectors (Ho & Li, 2014; Tsang et al., 2011). Among them, the directive of “Suggestions for the Grooming and Selection of Women Officials in the Era of Reform and Liberalization” was implemented in 1988 to increase women’s designation in political leadership positions (Tsang et al., 2011, p. 315). According to this directive, at least one woman must serve in leadership positions in county-level offices or above. From 1995 to 2000, “The Programme for the Development of Chinese Women” was first installed to improve women’s physical and financial well-being, as well as reassure their rights in participating and exercising decision-making in political affairs (Tsang et al., 2011, p. 315). This initiative reiterated the importance of women’s representation in government offices and delineated strategies to increase the number of positions held by women political leaders in government sectors at both national and local levels. The program had then been extended and enhanced by two subsequent programs: (1) National Program for Women’s Development 2001 to 2010; and (2) National Program for Women’s Development 2011 to 2020, along with many other national development plans dedicated to improving gender equality and ensuring women’s rights in China (Fan & Jiang, 2019).

After issuing a series of policies to promote women’s representation in national and local governments, the number of women political leaders surged in the 2010s. For example, during the first NPC annual meeting in 1954, the percentage of women delegates was only 12% (Zeng, 2014), but in 2013 the percentage of women delegates in NPC almost doubled to 23.4% (Fu et al., 2018; Zhiping, 2015). In 2012, the number of women members in the Politburo increased to two (Bjarnegard & Melander, 2013), even though it fell back to one in 2017. By the end of 2015, 10.8% of the total 1242 provincial leadership positions were held by women, reflecting an approximately 10% increase compared to a decade ago (Fu et al., 2018).

Despite occupying more seats in government positions, women have not yet reached the highest hierarchy of the Chinese political structure (Bjarnegard & Melander, 2013; USC US-China Institute, 2021). No women have been considered presidential candidates, nor have they

appeared in the seven-person standing committee of the Politburo. No woman has ever held the general secretary position of the CPC. A few women were appointed to lead provincial government offices, but the likelihood for lateral career mobility for these women officials remains low (Fu et al., 2018). Most women hold low-level staff positions in state-level offices. Even at the village and township levels, most women only served in low-level positions.

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN LEADERS IN GOVERNMENT SECTORS

According to the 2018 Statistical Monitoring Report on the National Program for Women's Development 2011 to 2020 published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2019), women's representation in NPC and national CPPCC has peaked. The 13th NPC consists of approximately 3000 delegates in total, of whom 24.9% were women. The 13th national CPPCC has over 2100 elected members in total, of whom 20.4% were women. A 1.5% increase and a 2.6% increase were witnessed in the number of women members in both institutions, respectively, compared to the previous term. The current standing committee of the State Council has one female member who serves as one of the Vice Premiers.

In local government offices, the gender distribution of high-level government officials is significantly skewed. Under the dual administrative structure, statistics showed that only four women leaders serve as the chief administrators in China's provincial-level governments (USC US-China Institute, 2021). At the village level, 24% of members serving on governing committees in 2018 were women, while on the grass-roots committees in urban areas, over half of the positions were held by women (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019). The numbers have shown that women's participation in higher-level government leadership positions continues to be difficult in China.

Across the world, China still ranks lower than many countries regarding women's representation in politics. In the recent Women in National Parliaments published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2021), China is ranked only 88th among 193 countries in 2021. With 24.9% of women holding positions in China's national parliament-equivalent entity, this percentage is about 4% higher than the average percentage of women in the lower chamber and unicameral in Asia, but almost 1% below the

global average, and more than 36% lower than Rwanda, the top country on the list.

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CHINESE WOMEN LEADERS

Women leaders are often perceived to possess certain personality traits and attributes that influence their leadership behaviors and styles. Commonly held gender-related stereotypes in Chinese society portray women as more soft-spoken, detail-oriented, and empathetic than men, who tend to be determined, tough-minded, and sometimes intimidating (Tsang et al., 2011; Zheng et al., 2017). Chinese women leaders with socially preferred personalities can benefit from these traits when working in government positions. Women leaders are believed to be better representatives and advocates of women's interests and needs in policymaking. Being understanding and approachable helps women leaders gain trust from other women (Jacka & Sargeson, 2015). It is a common perception that conscientious women are top performers in tackling administrative and analytical tasks, and compassionate women who put others' needs before their own tend to be more responsive and can better connect to those they serve.

However, negative impressions and misjudgment always follow when women exhibit not-so-ideal personalities and characteristics discerned by society or demonstrate certain leadership qualities that otherwise would be meritorious for men. For example, when a woman leader is confident and decisive, she is usually seen as aggressive and bossy (强势). When a woman leader is self-motivated and career-driven, she is often seen as a bad wife because she focuses too much on her work and not enough on her husband and family (Woodhams et al., 2015). Independent-thinkers and strategic decision-makers are unlikely to be associated with the descriptions of female leaders.

In addition, women face more barriers to gaining social capital, the most important contributing factor to political career advancement. The Chinese phrase, *Guanxi* (关系), describes the mechanism of building, maintaining, and expanding a social network to increase one's social capital. However, social capital is often created through informal interactions during social events. The impacts of such personal relationships stretch to one's professional life. Thus, social, professional, and political connections are sometimes intertwined. These connections can influence

promotion decisions, especially for high-level positions (Zheng et al., 2017).

In China, men are privileged with opportunities and advantages in building extensive social networks that benefit their professional advancement, while women often encounter difficulties in doing so to obtain access to upward mobility resources (Ho & Li, 2014; Wang & Dai, 2013; Woodhams et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2017). For example, one implicit work-related norm in China is the dinner table culture (酒桌文化), where people are bonded through eating dinner and drinking together after work hours. Casual socialization will be easily accomplished through dining and drinking together, and business or professional partnerships can be initially formed. However, a few reasons discourage women from attending such events, for instance, family obligations, personal opposition against drinking, and individual dietary habits. Moreover, there are also safety concerns. Under the influence of alcohol, immoral and harmful behaviors toward women may occur. Hence, women have limited opportunities to broaden their political networks due to the disadvantages of not participating in such a culture (Zheng et al., 2017).

In addition, the low representation of women in government sectors, especially in senior-level positions, presents another obstacle for women to build necessary social relations and professional connections. With a small number of existing women leaders in government offices, it is difficult to form a meaningful community of support that can provide professional advice and guidance to women who are searching for mentoring and coaching rapport (Huang & Aaltio, 2014; Liu, 2013; Tian & Bush, 2020). Therefore, women are generally constrained to a small professional and political circle. Thus, their upward mobility is highly restricted.

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT SECTORS

This section discusses four factors that affect Chinese women taking leadership positions in government sectors: first, the changes in perceptions toward women; second, the legislative efforts; third, the economic development; and fourth, the family obligations. These four factors represent cultural, social, and economic influences on women's participation in political and administrative leadership positions in China.

The Changes in Perceptions of Women

During the imperial dynasties, women were considered inferior to men and were not allowed to participate in public activities. However, the May Fourth Movement defied gender inequality and endorsed women's rights. Although negative perceptions of women stemming from traditional Confucian values are not eliminated in contemporary China, women's equal rights and contributions to society have been more and more acknowledged.

Confucianism became the dominant philosophy and mainstream value system in China more than two thousand years ago. Its influences reached many critical aspects of Chinese society, including gender-related social norms. The formation of Confucianism sprouted from the wisdom of Confucius, who was a philosopher, educator, and social activist in ancient China (Zhao, 2018). His students and followers documented and compiled his sagacious teaching practice, theory of living and thriving, and advice for social and national development, which later evolved into a school of thought—Confucianism, or Ru Xue (儒学). Another well-known contributor to Confucianism is Mencius, a renowned philosopher, thinker, and eminent educator in Chinese history. The beliefs derived from Confucianism have considerable impacts on social, political, and cultural development beyond the Chinese national border to almost all East Asian countries, including Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Angle, 2012; Chan, 2014; Freiner, 2012; Grosse, 2015; Jiang, 2013; Kim, 2016, 2018; Mang, 2021; Mun, 2015).

Confucianism emphasizes harmonious social relationships. It advocates a predetermined social hierarchy, and that is, if everyone in the society behaves according to their hierarchical ranking, the world would be peaceful and cordial (Freiner, 2012; Grosse, 2015; Zhao, 2018). Each member of society has a clearly defined role with underlying moral guidelines that they shall follow to form a world of order. Correspondingly, it defines five pairs of relationships called Wulun (五伦), then construes the roles and responsibilities that every individual should carry out in these five relationships to maintain a harmonized community (Freiner, 2012; Grosse, 2015; Hwang & Meyer, 2019). By separating people by class, age, and gender, Wulun defines the five relationships as ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and friends.

Among Wulun, the most relevant to this chapter is the relationship between husband and wife. It depicts the obligations and socially acceptable norms for both men and women and defines men's absolute power over women (Mun, 2015). In imperial China, women were expected to adhere to the three obediences and four virtues (Du, 2016). The three obediences for women are obeying their father before marriage, obeying their husband after marriage, and obeying their sons if widowed. The four virtues offer guidelines on how a proper woman should behave, including good ethics, proper speech (talk only when you were being spoken to), modest etiquette, and attentiveness to homemaking. These rules have imposed restrictions on women's behaviors and attitudes for thousands of years. Under these rules and virtues, women are expected to support their husbands and family and devote all of their time and energy to housekeeping and raising children. In addition, it demands women's unconditional compliance with the patriarchal authority in their household. A common Chinese proverb states that men work outside the house, while in contrast, women work inside home (男主外女主内). It accurately describes the perceived women's roles derived from Confucian doctrines.

During imperial dynasties in China, women were highly discouraged, if not completely banned from pursuing education and professional career like their men peers. Women's virtues were best demonstrated in staying unintelligent and untalented (Du, 2016; Sun & Li, 2017). Even inside their home, women were not allowed to make decisions. Consequently, a woman's worth was reflected only in the domestic sphere. This patriarchal belief made China a society dominated by men for thousands of years. Not surprisingly, there were no women leaders in public or government positions for a long time in Chinese history.

Furthermore, under Confucian doctrines, the perception of gender concatenates with the perception of age and therefore creates an intersectional stereotype. As a common Chinese saying goes, women have long hair but little wisdom (头发长见识短). Men are believed to be wiser when they grow older, but women turn to be more shortsighted when they are older. When a girl is young, she is considered naïve, inexperienced, and unprepared for leadership positions. As a woman gets a little older, she becomes unreliable because she will have too many family responsibilities, such as motherhood and taking care of aging parents. Thus, mid-age women are thought to be unable to spend enough energy on their leadership responsibilities because of their family duties. After a woman finally overcomes these unfair hurdles and arrives at her senior years, she should

be seen as someone who has sufficient professional experience to serve as a leader and is unlikely to be distracted by family duties. However, she continues facing another common bias that older women might not have the cognitive or physical capabilities to be strong leaders like their younger men counterparts (Tsang et al., 2011). A combination of these discriminatory cultural values and social norms results in the predicament in which Chinese women have generally not been selected as leadership candidates historically.

It was not until the May Fourth Movement that people began to question the gendered Confucian norms and demanded institutionalized changes to eliminate gender inequality. The movement pleaded for abolishing polygamy, promoting justice for women, urging gender equality, and supporting women's civil rights in marriage freedom and education. Many women joined the movement to confront discrimination and gender objectification and promote women's equal rights. During this time, issues of gender equality and desires for women's liberation drew the public's attention and became prominent in social discourses (Changli, 2010; Lianfen, 2012). As one of the turning points in Chinese history, the May Fourth movement challenged the old patriarchal rules and raised issues of gender inequality (Lianfen, 2012), along with all other cultural, social, and political transformations it sparked.

The changes in perceptions toward women furthered when the CPC took power in 1949. The CPC has long been a proponent of gender equality. Mao Zedong, the founding President of the PRC, proclaimed that women make equal contributions to society as men through a metaphorical statement, "Women can hold up half the sky" (Tian & Bush, 2020, p. 70; Yao & You, 2018, p. 221). This simple yet powerful rhetoric unmasked the country's vision for promoting equality between men and women. Since then, the CPC has affirmed the significance of women's equal contributions to society's economic and social advancement. The CPC has been dedicated to improving women's equal rights and social status (Hu, 2016) and working with the UN and other countries to promote gender equality worldwide (Zhiping, 2015).

Nonetheless, systemic discrimination against women has remained an issue in China (Li, 2016). There have been improvements in women's participation in education and gaining equal rights in marriage and divorce. However, violations of women's rights are still not uncommon. Women's stereotypical career choices are still teachers, nurses, office clerks, and homemakers. While more and more women are thriving in the

workplace and being promoted to leadership positions, being promoted into key decision-making positions in large corporate organizations or government offices is still rare. Recently, the number of women in key leadership positions has increased in the private sector. However, in many instances, the women either inherited the family-owned businesses or founded the companies independently (Zhang, 2012). In conclusion, although society's perceptions toward women have been changed to some degree, the traditional social barriers still exist and prevent women from attaining a high level of power in business and government sectors.

Legislative Efforts

The CPC supports women's equal rights and sees them as a part of its political objectives. The Constitution of the PRC declares that women are granted the same rights as men across all areas of political, economic, and social functions (Zhou, 2003). Women's rights and interests in receiving equal compensation and employment opportunities shall be vigorously protected. Additionally, the government of the PRC released several laws, policies, and decrees to protect such rights (Li, 2016). It was manifested through the legislation of Marriage Reform Law soon after the CPC established the new PRC government in 1949 (Cherng et al., 2019; Dong, 2014; Hu, 2016). The Marriage Reform Law gives women the freedom to marry who they wish to marry and the freedom of divorce and denounces forced and arranged marriage. It also abolishes concubinage and child betrothal and gives women equal rights to own family property as other family members and the right to keep their last name after marriage.

Amendments of the 1950 Marriage Law were issued in 1980 and 2001 to further clarify the husband's and wife's marital rights and obligations concerning family planning, property possession, at-fault divorce, and so forth (Dong, 2014). In addition, other laws were also promulgated to support women's fundamental rights (Li, 2016), including the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests (Chen, 2016a, b) and the Employment Promotion Law (Zhiping, 2015). What is more, improving and supporting women's overall development has been articulated in every China's national five-year development plan (Zhiping, 2015).

Other legislative efforts have also been made to enhance women's political participation in China. The first Electoral Law of the PRC passed in 1953 articulates that women have equal rights to vote and be elected

for governmental and political positions (Zhou, 2003). Recognizing the shortage of women in leadership positions, the Chinese government encourages local governments to hire and promote more women officials. The Organic Law of Village Committees introduced a quota mechanism to ensure a certain number of women representatives in lower-level village governments (Jacka & Sargeson, 2015; Sargeson & Jacka, 2018). It states that each government committee shall contain at least one women member or one-third of women representatives at the village level. Enforcing the quota system has successfully increased women's participation in local governance. A noticeable increase in the percentage of women's representation in county/village-level government leadership positions was observed (Zeng, 2014). A similar trend, if not more significant, was also detected in urban government offices (Wang & Dai, 2013). However, the number of women officials and representatives rarely surpassed the required quota, suggesting the glass ceiling effects that women leaders encountered (Ho & Li, 2014; Wang & Dai, 2013).

The Electoral Law of the PRC was passed over half a century ago and gave women equal political rights, but women's political and governmental leadership participation is lagging far behind today. On the surface, women have equal rights. For example, they can attend school to get an education and enter the workforce, but they are not released from traditional values and household responsibilities. The Chinese government and the CPC leaders have recognized this issue and continued their efforts in advocating gender equality through launching a series of programs designed to support women's rights. Some of these programs focused on promoting equality between spouses, combating domestic violence, and stopping sex trafficking (Li, 2016). Others increased women's representation in the government sectors and enhanced access to education, employment, economic resources, and health care. Even so, navigating the conflicts between the laws that promote women's rights and the traditional patriarchal values that have dominated Chinese society for thousands of years remains a challenge for Chinese women and policymakers.

Economic Advancement and Globalization

In the late 1970s, China launched an open-door policy to attract international business opportunities and to open the country's economic market for foreign investment and international trade. Since then, China has

experienced the fastest economic development period in its history and has grown into one of the economic superpowers in the world.

The soaring economy has uplifted the living conditions of Chinese people and brought changes to women's lives in China in the following ways. First, it opened more opportunities for women to receive a quality higher education and gain professional knowledge and skills. In 2018, approximately 53% of undergraduate students and 40% of doctoral students in China were women (Tang & Horta, 2021). In addition, almost 60% of the students in adult education programs were women (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019). As a result, more competent and qualified women have entered the workforce. A strong education background and advanced career readiness competencies are essential for women to compete for equal opportunities in both private and public sectors.

Second, economic development is often correlated with women's empowerment (Shuai et al., 2019). Historically, Chinese women lacked financial independence because they had to rely on their husband's income and were usually not allowed to work outside the house. Therefore, women's economic status was low, and their participation as leaders in local governance was almost nonexistent before 1949 (Wang & Dai, 2013). The laws and policies legislated by the PRC urged fair opportunities for women and accelerated economic growth that spawned more employment opportunities. In this way, women can have a source of income that allows them to be financially independent and improve their economic status. Hence, women are empowered through education and financial independence. They can choose a political career if they want, and opportunities have become more attainable.

China's open-door policy and worldwide globalization have progressed the development of feminism in China to a certain degree. Channels to receive up-to-date information have become widely available. Western countries' ideation of feminism and advocacy for gender equality and justice have been dispersed across the country (Sun & Li, 2017). With expanded reach to the global community, women in China now can learn about other countries' efforts to promote equal rights. However, it is not without resistance to women's freedom to achieve the goals of equality in China. In recent years, traditional perceptions of women as child-bearers and homemakers are gaining popularity, and women are often required to retire five to ten years earlier than men (Otis, 2015).

Family Obligations and Work-life Balance

Despite the country's success in passing legislation and reforming the economic system, due to the penetrating influences from Confucianism, biases against women remain prevalent in society. Men, and even women themselves, still hold gendered and sexist prejudice, particularly those living in rural villages (Ho & Li, 2014; Jacka & Sargeson, 2015). Women are sometimes seen as less socially and intellectually developed and should only work on family-related matters. This stereotype has been reflected in work assignments for women leaders in government sectors. Usually, women cadres head offices like family planning (Sargeson & Jacka, 2018; Wang & Dai, 2013) and typically do not have actual political power or authoritative influence.

Impacted by the reviving gender-based social norms, nowadays, women in China often battle difficult situations where they have to manage between pursuing their career aspirations and fulfilling expectations of being a wife and mother at the same time (Luo & Chui, 2018). They face double-sided pressures from their husband and relatives to fulfill wifely duties and their supervisors to deliver satisfactory job performance. In addition, many women take the sole responsibilities to help their children with schoolwork, arrange weekend activities for the family, and care for both their own and their husband's aging parents. A national survey showed that Chinese women's participation in political life was negatively impacted by the overwhelming family obligations (Zeng, 2014). Thus, even though some women are determined to pursue a career in government sectors, it can be exceedingly exhausting and stressful for them to balance work and personal life.

FUTURE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

With support and advocacy from the CPC, China has endeavored to address issues of gender inequality and tried to rectify gender imbalance in government offices. Yet, compared to many other countries around the world, it still has a long way to go to obtain women's equal representation in government sectors. UN Women, a United Nations entity of women empowerment and gender equality, published a map of Women in Politics: 2021 and reported record high data of countries with women serving as the Heads of State or Heads of Government in 2021 (UN Women, 2021). According to this map, China is ranked much lower than

many countries for women in ministerial positions and is not a country where women are in the highest positions of State.

Moving forward, China must overcome several challenges to succeed in promoting gender equality in government sectors. First, China needs to continuously increase women's descriptive representation (Joshi & Och, 2014) at every level of government, especially for high-ranking leadership positions. As mentioned earlier, it is still rare for women to occupy key government leadership positions at the state level. A few women are in leadership positions at the provincial and lower-level offices, but women are still underrepresented in positions that yield true political decision-making authority. In addition, it requires more than enforcing the quota systems to increase the number of women leaders in government positions. Changes are needed to create an organizational culture free of discrimination for women to flourish. Enhanced training programs can be helpful to raise awareness of gender inequality and bias. Women leaders must also be recognized for their professional accomplishments through fair compensation and promotions in the workplace. In this way, we may see more and more women leaders in key policy decision-making positions in the nation's state, provincial, and municipal governments.

Second, China must improve women's substantive representation. Substantive representation refers to women's ability to campaign and approve meaningful policy changes that represent women's interests, such as women's rights, collective needs, and resources to resolve women's issues. It demands real changes beyond numerical increases (Sargeson & Jacka, 2018). For example, imposing a quota system may increase the number of women in government offices, but if most of them are low-level positions, they may not have the power to make meaningful changes. If that is the case, gender-related issues may never be addressed or resolved through policy- and lawmaking. Ultimately, women leaders use their political influences to improve women's lives by promoting equal employment opportunities and benefits, health care and well-being, family planning, education, and beyond (Mastracci, 2017). Unfortunately, in the history of the PRC, it was scarce for women to occupy top political leadership positions in both state and provincial governments. To truly break the glass ceiling, more women must be granted a path to climb to the top ranks of the political ladder.

The third challenge is building a pathway that will cultivate the success of future women leaders. The country must recruit more female college graduates to work for the government. The current recruitment practice

for government job openings still favor male college graduates because working in government sectors as a political leader is a traditionally popular career choice for men (Gao et al., 2019). Therefore, the current recruitment practice must change and offer equal entry opportunities for women. To achieve that, the current leaders of the Chinese government must truly believe that women can excel in leadership positions as men. Additional support and resources in training and career development will also be helpful. Besides, China can develop human resources policies to implement women-friendly practice, such as on-site daycare, to assist women government officials in maintaining work-life balance.

Finally, women's empowerment must start with improving women's self-efficacy. Influenced by traditional values, many women agree that only men can become political leaders. Building a supportive professional network can help women gain confidence and guidance in pursuing government sector careers. Education and training, including higher education and professional development programs, can prepare women with up-to-date leadership knowledge and skills. In addition, organizations dedicated to protecting women's rights and supporting women's social and political status should be promoted. One example of such an organization is the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF; Li, 2016; Sun & Li, 2017). We hope to see a growing number of women organizations like ACWF in the near future.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Gender disparity in government and political leadership positions continues to be a critical problem worldwide (True, 2013). More efforts are needed to thoroughly understand gender-based bias and inadequacy of resources to support women leaders in government sectors in China. Upon reviewing the current status of women leaders in Chinese government offices, future research can explore women's leadership development, career development in government positions, effective mentoring and coaching approaches, and strategies to facilitate cultural changes in government sectors. The research outcomes can inform the practice of preparing women with advanced leadership skills and promoting gender equality in the workplace. Additionally, topics such as how to assist women leaders with professional networking and what resources can improve their work-life balance should also be probed further in future research.

Countries and regions that share similar cultural roots and heritage, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, had increased women leaders in politics (Zeng, 2014). Therefore, it will be beneficial to conduct comparative research to examine and compare governmental policies to identify factors affecting women's political leadership participation. In addition, best practice can be learned through benchmarking and cross-national studies.

Future research on women's leadership in Chinese government sectors should also pay attention to regional differences. Certain areas in China, such as the metropolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai, and many coastal provinces in eastern China are much more economically advantaged than other inner land regions, such as the northwestern or southwestern villages. The impacts of socio-economic-induced divergence on women's political participation in local governance need to be carefully analyzed and investigated.

CONCLUSION

In summary, China has improved gender equality in many ways. Women's representation in government offices has increased since the founding of the PRC. However, fundamental issues of gender inequality stay unsolved, especially in rural and undeveloped regions. Moreover, insufficient community support, mentoring, and developmental opportunities continue to hinder the improvement of women's participation in government leadership positions.

The combined influences of ideological shift, legislative efforts, economic development, and work-life balance concerns present complexities for promoting gender equality and adding more women to government leadership positions in China. These factors are interlaced and provide a unique social and political context to increase Chinese women leaders in government positions through a top-down approach by assigning quotas and implementing legislative changes. As a result, the number of women leaders has grown due to the mandated process. Hopefully, new cultural norms will eventually be adapted in a positive way to build a woman-friendly society.

REFERENCES

- Angle, S. C. (2012). *Contemporary Confucian political philosophy: Toward progressive Confucianism*. Polity.
- Bai, Z., & Liu, J. (2020). China's governance model and system in transition. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 9(1), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2020.1744229>
- Bjarnegard, E., & Melander, E. (2013). Revisiting representation: Communism, women in politics, and the decline of armed conflict in East Asia. *International Interactions*, 39(4), 558–574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2013.805132>
- Changli, L. (2010). The social consequences of the May Fourth Movement: The establishment of women's property rights. *Chinese Studies in History*, 43(4), 20–42.
- Chan, J. (2014). *Confucian perfectionism: A political philosophy for modern times*. Princeton University Press.
- Chen, L. (2016a). Gender statistics and local governance in China: State feminist versus feminist political economy approaches. *The China Quarterly*, 225, 190–213. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741015001630>
- Chen, W. (2016b). Is the label 'minimal legislature' still appropriate? The role of the National People's Congress in China's political system. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 22(2), 257–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2015.1134909>
- Cherng, H.-Y. S., Hasmath, R., & Ho, B. (2019). Holding up half the sky? Ethno-gender labour market outcomes in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(117), 415–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1542222>
- Dong, J. (2014). China's latest marriage law amendment and family property: Tradition and modernity. *Frontiers of Law in China*, 9(4), 601–616. <https://doi.org/10.3868/s050-003-014-0038-0>
- Du, X. (2016). Does Confucianism reduce board gender diversity? Firm-level evidence from China. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 136, 399–436. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2508-x>
- Fan, H., & Jiang, X. (2019). The evaluation and analysis of the government's entity responsibilities of promoting gender equality and women's development. *The Journal of Human Rights*, 18(3), 336–350.
- Freiner, N. (2012). *The social and gender politics of Confucian nationalism: Women and the Japanese nation-state*. Springer.
- Fu, G., Wei, J., Shi, Y., Yan, Y., Li, Y., Zhan, J., & Wang, J. (2018). Examining discrimination against women, non-Han minorities, intellectuals, and non-Communist members among the current China's provincial political elites. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 39(2), 177–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2018.1449526>

- Gao, J., Kong, D., & Kong, G. (2019). Who secures job opportunities in the Chinese government? Evidence based on the first jobs of graduates from a Chinese college. *Pacific Economic Review*, 24(3), 447–463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0106.12216>
- Grosse, I. (2015). Gender values in Vietnam—Between Confucianism, communism, and modernization. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 3(2), 253–272. <https://doi.org/10.18588/201511.000045>
- Hasija, N. (2013). *Political role of women in the Chinese National Movement (1921–1949)*. Mainstream Weekly. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article4112.html>
- Ho, C.-S. B., & Li, Q. (2014). Rural Chinese women’s political participation: Problems and prospects. In Z. Hao & S. Chen (Eds.), *Social Issues in China* (pp. 23–44). Springer.
- Hu, A. (2016). Half the sky, but not yet equal: China’s feminist movement. *Harvard International Review*, 37(3), 15–18.
- Huang, J., & Aaltio, I. (2014). Guanxi and social capital: Networking among women managers in China and Finland. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 39, 22–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.09.002>
- Hwang, K., & Meyer, D. S. (2019). Relations as the aim of education in Joseon neo-Confucianism: The case of the five relationships. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51(9), 936–948. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1431120>
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2021). *Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments*. Parline: The IPU’s Open Data Platform. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2021>
- Jacka, T., & Sargeson, S. (2015). Representing women in Chinese village self-government: A new perspective on gender, representation, and democracy. *Critical Asian Studies*, 47(4), 477–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2015.1079990>
- Jiang, Q. (2013). *A Confucian constitutional order: How China’s ancient past can shape its political future*. Edited by D. A. Bell & R. Fan; translated by E. Ryden. Princeton University Press.
- Joshi, D., & Och, M. (2014). Talking about my generation and class? Unpacking the descriptive representation of women in Asian parliaments. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 47, 168–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.06.004>
- Kim, S. (2016). *Public reason Confucianism: Democratic perfectionism and constitutionalism in East Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, S. (2018). *Democracy after virtue: Toward pragmatic Confucian democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Li, X. (2016). *Modern China*. ABC-CLIO.

- Lianfen, Y. (2012). New ethics and old roles: The identity dilemma of May Fourth new women. *Social Sciences in China*, 33(1), 71–91.
- Liu, S. (2013). A few good women at the top: The China case. *Business Horizons*, 56(4), 483–490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2013.04.002>
- Luo, M. S., & Chui, E. W. T. (2018). Gender division of household labor in China: Cohort analysis in life course patterns. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(12), 3153–3176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18776457>
- Mang, F. (2021). State perfectionism and the importance of Confucianism for East Asia's future development. *The Philosophical Forum*, 52(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phil.12277>
- Mastracci, S. (2017). The effect of women's representation on the Global Gender Gap Index. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 30(3), 241–254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-05-2016-0095>
- McMahon, K. (2013). Women rulers in imperial China. *Nan nü: Men, women, and gender in early and imperial China*, 15(2), 179–218. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685268-0152P0001>
- Mun, J. Y. (2015). The impact of Confucianism on gender equality in Asia. *The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, 16(3), 633–657.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China. (2019). 2018 statistical monitoring report on the implementation of China national program for women's development (2011–2020). Retrieved January 10, 2022, from http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202001/t20200103_1721237.html
- Otis, E. (2015, March 19). *Inequality in China and the impact on women's rights*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/inequality-in-china-and-the-impact-on-womens-rights-38744>
- Peng, N., Yu, T., & Mills, A. (2015). Feminist thinking in late seventh-century China: A critical hermeneutics analysis of the case of Wu Zetian. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 34(1), 67–83. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2012-0112>
- Reuvid, J. (2008). The Chinese government structure and administration. In *Business Insights: China* (pp. 47–53).
- Sargeson, S., & Jacka, T. (2018). Improving women's substantive representation in community government: Evidence from Chinese villages. *Development and Change*, 49(5), 1166–1194. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12377>
- Shuai, Y., Shuai, C. M., Li, W. J., & Huang, F. B. (2019). Role of women's empowerment in improving farmer's livelihood: Empirical evidence from China. *Quality & Quantity*, 53(2), 621–639. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-018-0778-6>
- Sun, J. Y. & Li, J. (2017). Women in Leadership in China: Past, Present, and Future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. Mclean (Eds.), *Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership* (pp. 19–35). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-54996-5_2

- Tang, L. & Horta, H. (2021). Women academics in Chinese universities: A historical perspective. *Higher Education*, 82(5), 865–895. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00669-1>
- Tian, Z., & Bush, H. R. (2020). Half the sky: Interwoven resilience processes of women political leaders in China. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(1), 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2019.1704829>
- Tiezzi, S. (2021). *What is the CPPCC anyway? The Diplomat*. <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/what-is-cppcc-anyway/docview/2495452029/se-2?accountid=11578>
- True, J. (2013). Counting women and balancing gender: Increasing women’s participation in governance. *Politics & Gender*, 9(3), 351–359. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X13000238>
- Tsang, A. Y., Chan, P. S., & Zhang, L. (2011). Reconciling conflicts: The “accidental” women leaders in contemporary China. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 26(3), 314–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109911418441>
- UN Women. (2021). *Women in politics: 2021*. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/women-in-politics-map-2021>
- USC US-China Institute. (2021). *Women in government*. <https://china.usc.edu/women-government/>
- Wang, Z., & Dai, W. (2013). Women’s participation in rural China’s self-governance: Institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural factors in a Jiangsu county. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 26(1), 91–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2012.01605.x>
- Woodhams, C., Xian, H., & Lupton, B. (2015). Women managers’ careers in China: Theorizing the influence of gender and collectivism. *Human Resource Management*, 54(6), 913–931. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21643>
- Xu, H., Luke, N., & Short, S. E. (2021). Women’s political leadership and adult health: Evidence from rural and urban China. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 62(1), 100–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146520987810>
- Yao, Y., & You, W. (2018). Women’s political participation and gender gaps of education in China: 1950–1990. *World Development*, 106, 220–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.01.004>
- Yi-chong, X., & Weller, P. (2016). The challenges of governing: The State Council in China. *The China Journal*, 76, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/684857>
- Zeng, B. (2014). Women’s political participation in China: Improved or not? *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 15(1), 136–150.

- Zhao, Q. (2018). The influence of Confucianism on Chinese politics and foreign policy. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 7(4), 321–328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-03-2018-0057>
- Zhang, Y. (2012). *Lessons for executive women from Chinese boardrooms*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeswomanfiles/2012/10/09/lessons-for-executive-women-from-chinese-boardrooms/?sh=1c00ab226e08>
- Zheng, C., Ai, J., & Liu, S. (2017). The elastic ceiling: Gender and professional career in Chinese courts. *Law & Society Review*, 51(1), 168–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12249>
- Zhiping, Z. (2015). Gender equality remains a priority. *Beijing Review*, 42, 48–48.
- Zhou, J. (2003). Keys to women's liberation in communist China: An historical overview. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 5(1), 67–77.



Women Leaders in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Sector

Yuanlu Niu  and *Cynthia Sims*

Although women face many common challenges and barriers to leadership positions globally, China presents a distinct case. Chinese women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2021). The reasons for the gap between men and women in leadership include cultural impact, discrimination policies, and the difficulties of feminism development in China (Adnane, 2012; Sun, 2017; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Since the Han Dynasty (B.C. 207–A.D. 202), social and official ideology was influenced by Confucianism, which is said to have attributed to the subordination of women (Mak, 2013). Traditionally, under this regime, a woman was required to obey her father

Y. Niu (✉)
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA
e-mail: yn005@uark.edu

C. Sims
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL, USA
e-mail: chsims3@neiu.edu

before marriage, her husband during married life, and her sons in widowhood (Cheng, 2008). Therefore, with the historical and cultural impacts, leadership is viewed as male-gendered while the idealized image of women is caring and assisting men (Zhao & Jones, 2017).

According to the current retirement policy, there is a gap in the mandatory retirement age between males and females in public service (Sun, 2017). For public servants, including those at state-owned enterprises, men are required to retire at the age of 60, while women retire at 50 (for female workers) or 55 (for female cadres). Therefore, women have shorter life at work to achieve leadership positions compared to men. Moreover, young women are usually considered inexperienced and unprepared for leadership roles, while middle-aged women are perceived as “tied down by family demands” (Tsang et al., 2011, p. 315). The age of Chinese women is used as a reason to obstruct them from achieving leadership positions (Tsang et al., 2011).

Chinese women’s leadership development is also influenced by feminist development. The goal of post-2000 feminism is to “change perceptions, create public attention, and put pressure on government policies using the leverage of public attention” (Wang, 2018, p. 13). However, the current status of feminism in China reflects “its precariousness as a school of thought, and activist practice, and a topic of study” (Liao, 2020, p. 259). The mere concept of feminism is not supported by the mainstream in China (Sun, 2017).

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on exploring women leaders in Chinese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to contribute to the research of Chinese women in leadership. While a growing body of work is building around women’s leadership development, there are still many questions that need to be addressed (Jennings, 2018). Women are still underrepresented in both the public and private sectors globally. Although a few studies have been conducted regarding women’s leadership development in China, there is very limited research focused on the NGO sector, and knowledge of women’s roles in NGOs is scarce in China. It is important to understand the factors that influence women leaders’ success in Chinese NGOs and highlight their roles. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a comprehensive understanding of NGO women leaders’ lived experiences in China. In the following sections, we discuss (1) gender

issues in Chinese NGOs, (2) women leadership and women NGOs development, and (3) women leaders' experience in Chinese NGOs. At the end of this chapter, we provide recommendations for practice, policymakers, and future research to enhance women's leadership development in the NGOs sector in China.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHINESE NGOS

In the Chinese context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate within restricted political environments (Lu et al., 2021). The NGOs cover areas of education, poverty alleviation, community development, environment, and health (Corsetti, 2019). The term NGO was introduced to China when Beijing was preparing to host the United Nations' 4th World Congress on Women in 1995 (Hsiung, 2021). And, research on NGOs in China has examined their development in the context of state and civil society. There are various definitions and categories of the term "NGO." For example, He and Wang (2008) stated that the Domestic Chinese NGOs were developed into four categories: mass organizations, quasi-governmental organizations, registered groups, and grassroots social groups. China's mass organizations were established by the "incumbent regime...to augment [its] control over the rest of society" (Kasza, 1995, p. 8); "execute the various policies and orders of the [Communist Party of China (CPC) and the state]"; and "understand and collect the opinions, perspectives and interests of the masses" (He & Wang, 2008, p. 135). Both mass organizations and quasi-governmental organizations have Communist affiliations. Quasi-governmental organizations are started by the Chinese government and have more limited political autonomy than mass organizations while assisting relevant government agencies. Registered groups include social groups, non-state non-commercial groups, and foundations. The majority of these registered groups were found and limited in daily operations by government or CPC agencies. Grassroots social groups were created by individuals, also including state officials who fund their own NGOs and operate the organizations by using power but not be influenced by the state.

More recently, Lu and Li (2020) noted that there are two types of NGOs in China: civic NGOs and government-organized NGOs. While Chinese civic NGOs are initiated by private citizens, which are similar to

western NGOs, government-organized NGOs are funded by the government and assist relevant government agencies in daily operations (Lu & Li, 2020). Civic NGOs are allowed to fulfill social welfare needs (Hsu & Hasmath, 2014). For example, they utilize local knowledge to identify and flexibly implement sources provided by the government to meet the community's needs (Xu et al., 2018). Also, civic NGOs provide programs that focus on building community capacity and individuals' confidence to improve their lives sustainably (Lu & Li, 2020). However, there is limited space for civic NGOs in China because of China's authoritarian political structure. Civic NGOs are limited in their advocacy, which could be seen as a challenge to government policies and result in political risks (Hsu & Hasmath, 2014; Li et al., 2017). For example, the NGOs work on the frontline with communities and advocate on behalf of the communities to represent their rights and opinions, so they work with the government to provide equitable social services and help the communities comprehend government policies (Lu & Li, 2020).

It is difficult to find the total number of domestic NGOs in Mainland China because of the various definitions of the term NGO in China. Previous scholars or observers tend to estimate the numbers of NGOs in China based on the number of "social organizations" that have officially registered with the country's Civil Affairs (Corsetti, 2019). According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2020), by the end of 2019, there were over 860,000 registered social organizations. However, there are more non-registered NGOs. Chinese NGOs were born, socialized, and evolved in an authoritarian institutional environment with tight government supervision and limitations (Hasmath, 2016). It is difficult to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs for many Chinese grassroots NGOs because of burdensome requirements, such as the need to find a government sponsor.

In the early years of NGO development in China, many organizations depended on universities and colleges to survive because they provided both a legal, organizational form and a talent pool (Cao, 2016). Then, in order to control the NGOs, the Chinese government requested all Chinese NGOs to register with the government to meet the legal requirement (Tai, 2015). The Civil Affairs agencies take responsibility for registering and managing NGOs, and they are legally empowered to evaluate and make decisions for denying or accepting the applications for registration. Also, they tend to create and support NGOs that are more controllable, while they limit the political influence of NGOs and take

precautions to manage less trustworthy NGOs (Cai, 2017). Moreover, the government controls the NGOs through the management of sources of funding. Therefore, NGOs have to develop good relations with the government to ensure both the operations and financial support sustainably. In 2016, China implemented a new Charity Law, which changed the ways domestic charitable organizations can register and fundraise (China File, 2017). Then, the government took a more cautious approach to manage overseas NGOs operated in China through implementing a new law, “Management of Foreign Non-Government Organizations Activities in China,” in 2017 (Corsetti, 2019). All foreign NGOs must find approved Chinese sponsors and register with public security bureaus for authorization to conduct their activities. About 10,000 overseas NGOs in China were impacted by the new law because it is hard for them to find government agencies or public institutions as their sponsors due to the political responsibilities involved (Cai, 2017).

China’s government, as a one-party authoritarian regime, dominates the development of the NGO sector. The government recognizes that the contributing role of NGOs in social governance, as well as understand that NGOs have help to reduce the state’s burden of social service provision and address a variety of issues (e.g., poverty, public health, environmental protection, rural development, education, children, women, legal aid, community issues, migrant workers, and disaster relief) arising from the fast-socio-economic changes in China (Cai, 2017). Therefore, the government becomes tolerant of NGOs, which leads to their proliferation. As a result, the number of registered NGOs has increased from just over 4000 in 1988 (Fang, 2019), around 200 times. However, the central government still has a concern about the potential political threat arising from NGOs independent of the state’s control, while the local government is worried about the political responsibilities related to the management of NGOs (Cai, 2017). Currently, the development of NGOs is still at a very young age and has a unique path in the Chinese context.

GENDER ISSUES IN NGOS

In 1976, Xiaoping Deng launched the “open-door” and reform policies. Chinese economics has transitioned “from a centrally planned economy based mainly on import substitution to a guided market economy open to foreign investment in the late 1970s” (Frenkel & Kuruvilla, 2002, p. 398). It brought many benefits and opportunities to Chinese women in the

labor force (Edwards, 2000). However, at the same time, women also faced many problems in society. By 2021, according to World Economic Forum (2021):

Ranking 107th overall, China has closed 68.2% of its gender gap to date, improving by 0.6 percentage points over last year's edition. This progress can be attributed to improving its Economic Participation and Opportunity pillar, where the gap has been closed by five percentage points this year, passing the 70% milestone (70.1%, 69th globally). Notably, wage and income gaps between women and men have been reduced: 80.6% of the wage gap and 61.2% of the income gaps are now closed. However, large gaps remain in terms of labor force participation (82.9% closed so far) as well as in terms of senior roles, where only 11.4% of board members are women, and 16.7% of senior managers are women, corresponding to a gender gap of 80%. The limited presence of women in leadership positions is also reflected in large Political Empowerment gaps. Only 11.8% of this gap has closed so far, ranking China 118th globally. Only 24.9% of parliamentarians and 3.2% of ministers are women, and a woman has been in a head-of-state position for less than one year in the past 50. (p. 36)

Women in NGOs in China are highly represented as employees, but there are fewer women than men in leadership positions (IFeng News, 2018). Women continue to experience gender discrimination, stereotyping, and lack of leadership development in NGOs in China. In the Chinese context, women are forced to take more family caring responsibilities than men, which is a barrier to women's career development (IFeng News, 2018). However, men are expected to support their families financially, so men are preferred to have more opportunities for promotion and increased salaries. Yang (2015) investigated 37 NGOs in China and indicated that 25 (67.5%) of the 37 NGOs had women employees. In the results, six of 37 NGOs reported that they prefer to hire male applicants when both male and female applicants have the same qualities in recruitment advertisements. They provided reasons, such as the position requires employees to travel or heavy labor; women employees' work may be influenced by absence during childbirth or taking responsibilities for their family; the position requires employees to network with other male leaders. Women are perceived to be deficient in leadership and managerial characteristics, which are the qualities required for success in upper-level positions in Asian culture (Chao & Ha, 2019). There is a huge need

for gender equality education in the workplace of NGOs (IFeng News, 2018). Also, there is a lack of empirical research to investigate the gender issues in NGOs.

WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND NGOS DEVELOPMENT

In NGOs, women volunteers, employees, and leaders make important contributions. Empowering more women and providing them with equal resources and opportunities can attract more women to participate in and donate to NGOs, as well as make the organizations more professional, diverse, and sustainable (Shanxi Association of Women Marriage and Family Studies, 2015). It is no secret that there is a lack of gender diversity in leadership within Chinese NGOs, and there are still a lot of challenges and barriers for Chinese women in the NGOs to overcome. However, in some NGOs, Chinese women are breaking barriers and leading with innovative ideas regarding the lives of Chinese people while they are achieving their own career success. Many Chinese women are doing remarkable work in NGOs, from youth leadership development to women's empowerment.

The founders of many NGOs that support women and children are women in China. Chinese women participate in NGOs and even establish NGOs because of their experiences in daily life (Shen, 2019). They want to help others with the same problems while they overcome their personal difficulties. For example, the founder of an NGO, Angel House, Wang Fang, is a mother of a child with cerebral palsy, and the experience of supporting her child inspired her to create this NGO (Wang, 2014). Angel House was established in 2002 and provides rehabilitation therapy and online consulting service to help cerebral palsy children recover (Angel House, 2018a). Also, they provide career counseling and vocational training to youths with disabilities (Angel House, 2018b). Fang Wang has become the most influential leader in this field. In 2019, Angel House helped 145 children or youths who had cerebral palsy (Angel House, 2020).

Tian Huiping is another mother who decided to participate in the NGO sector because of her child. In 1993, she founded Beijing Stars and Rain, which is China's first educational NGO to serve children with autism (Xin, n.d.). The organization is dedicated to helping children with autism by providing special education. It offers education programs to

both children and parents to understand autism and increase the professional treatment of autism. Specifically, Tian led Stars and Rain to focus on the therapy of Applied Behavior Analysis and provide training about this therapy so parents can then continue working with their children more effectively. In February 2010, Tian joined the board and became its president, and she kept in constant communication with the council members.

Although open-door and reform policies brought many benefits and opportunities to Chinese women, they still have many barriers in the workplace and life. Under this context, in 1988, Wang Xingjuan established China's first women's studies NGO, which is the predecessor of the Beijing Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center, Beijing (Guo, 2015). In past years, Wang has devoted her life to the center that focuses on helping disadvantaged women and children to care for their physical and psychological health by providing psychological consultations and other social services. Her work has contributed to protecting human rights, promoting gender equality, strengthening democracy, increasing economic opportunities, and making a difference for thousands of Chinese women's lives.

Gao Xiaoxian is another outstanding woman who worked on women's issues following the economic reform in China. In the 1980s, she established the Shaanxi Research Association of Marriage and Family (Hsiung, 2021). Gao is a pioneer who studied the issues of women's unemployment, being laid off, employment discrimination, and women's poverty in rural areas. In addition, she produced seminars on the law of protecting women's rights. Therefore, she led the organization to promote research on women's theories and enlightened a group of women to enhance their gender awareness.

Since the 1980s, rural women have also been influenced by China's economic reform, and more and more rural women became workers in urban areas (Hsiung, 2021). Xie Lihua established the Rural Women magazine and a comprehensive NGO, the Home for Women Migrant Workers and School for Rural Women, which focuses on rural women's issues (Tai, 2015). Xie led the organization to promote and protect "the interests and rights of women in China's rural areas, which has included helping female migrant workers in urban areas to acquire the necessary skills and awareness to transition successfully to urban life" (Tai, 2015, p. 33). Several programs were developed to teach illiterate women to read and reduce their suicide rates. In 2001, Xie established the Cultural

and Development Center for Rural Women, a Beijing-based organization committed to the development of Chinese women.

Guo Jianmei was the first public interest lawyer working full-time in legal aid to assist thousands of disadvantaged women in getting access to justice in China (Right Livelihood, 2019). She and several faculty members from Peking University founded the Center for Women's Law Studies and Services of Peking University that was the predecessor of Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling Service Center (Cao, 2016). Also, she has founded and directed several other organizations for the protection of women's rights. Since 1995, she and her teams have offered free legal counseling to over 120,000 women and have been involved in over 4000 lawsuits to enforce women's rights and advance gender equality all over China (Right Livelihood, 2019). She consistently addressed gender bias in the justice system and helped raise gender awareness in China. She led her teams to guide women through lawsuits and carries out legal advocacy at a national level on issues like unequal pay, sexual harassment, women's land rights in rural China, work contracts that prohibit pregnancies, and forced early retirement without compensation.

Women are not only leading women's NGOs but are also making significant contributions to other fields in the NGO sector. Liao Xiao founded the Global Village of Beijing (GVB), which became China's first environmental protection NGO (Zhou, 2010). In past years, Liao traveled to many places to present her studies to increase public and government awareness of environmental protection. To advocate for an eco-friendly lifestyle, she led GVB to issue two guidebooks for the public. In addition, she created models for green neighborhood complexes and rural communities, as well as organized many social movements regarding pollution, recycling, and consumption reduction. In 2008, she also led her team to Sichuan Province, which was destroyed by a strong earthquake, to help with reconstruction efforts.

Zhang Ying founded China's first anti-AIDS NGO, Fuyang AIDS Orphan Salvation Association, in 2003 (Xu, 2010). Zhang led the organization to help Chinese children who are infected with HIV as well as poverty-stricken children without HIV but who have family members who died from AIDS. She worked closely with these children and provided financial support for their lives and education.

Yang Xueqin worked as a teacher at the program "Teach for China" in Yunnan from 2012 to 2014, and she witnessed the lack of vocational and

career education resources for students in rural areas (China Development Brief, 2018). Therefore, she established Shenzhen Tomorrow Education and Public Welfare Development Centre in 2016. While the organization still faces many challenges as an online platform, the aim of this organization is to provide 40 million rural middle-school students and 30 million urban middle-school students with career development education through online courses and learning. Yang wants to find a more sustainable way to provide free career development education for students in rural areas through exploring revenue options for businesses.

Wang Juan established iHEARu Charity Fund in 2016. She and her team provide professional support to hearing-impaired children. By 2021 April, the organization had provided financial aids to 19,000 hearing-impaired children and families. Among them, 1758 hearing-impaired children and adolescents were implanted with cochlear implants, and 3393 hearing-impaired children were funded for rehabilitation training (iHEARu Charity Fund, n.d.). Also, the organization provided training to 1673 parents of hearing-impaired children. More than 1000 volunteers (including voluntary organizations and individuals) participated in the training, visits, and charity activities supported by iHEARu Charity Fund.

WOMEN LEADERS' EXPERIENCE IN NGOS

There is a gap in the literature focused on women leaders' experiences and perceptions regarding the challenges faced and support received for their leadership development. Therefore, the authors conducted in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with six NGO women leaders to understand their experience of being women leaders in NGOs in China. A purposeful sampling strategy was utilized to recruit potential participants on the research topic and the availability of resources. To ensure diverse samples, we recruited women leaders in different types of NGOs (e.g., grassroots NGOs, International NGOs, and Foundations). Their work has made significant contributions to gender equity, human rights, health, environment protection, etc. The selection criteria for participants included: (1) worked or have worked in a leadership position in an NGO in China, (2) being a woman, and (3) willing to share their experiences and perceptions of the challenges they faced and support they received for their leadership development. We contacted participants who met the selection criteria through personal connections via WeChat in China. A

snowball approach was then used to recruit additional potential participants. Six NGO women leaders participated in the interviews online during June and July 2021. The age of participants ranged from 29 to 51. The major interview questions were:

1. What challenges have you faced as a leader?
2. How have you addressed these challenges?
3. What support have you received for leadership development?

All participants were provided the informed consent request form prior to the interview, and they gave their permission to audio record the conversations. Each interview was conducted in Mandarin Chinese and lasted approximately 1 h. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and anonymized before data analysis. The Mandarin Chinese transcripts were translated into English for data analysis. To decrease translation bias, the researcher used the translation-back-translation approach. A thematic approach was applied for data analysis. The authors used *Nvivo* 12 to code the interview transcripts. The findings are presented as themes that were generated in the following sections. These include *gender impact, support, and strategies for leadership development*, and *women leaders' efforts on gender equity and equality*.

Gender Impact

During the interviews, these leaders talked about the impact of gender in their work and leadership development. Different views were reported by the women leaders. They seem to oscillate from negating and to admitting the gender impact. For example, NGO04, 32 years old, has worked in the NGOs sector for four years. Currently, she is the Secretary-General in an Environmental Protection NGO. She said that “to be honest, I rarely see gender discrimination in NGO sectors...Maybe the reason is that my organization emphasizes the value of gender equality, so no one practices gender discrimination” (NGO04). Also, another women leader, NGO06, 30 years old, established an NGO that provides psychological healing and community support to women with disabilities in 2019. She said that “I do not believe gender is a big issue to influence my work. I think the personality or resources are more important to my work. Also, maybe the disability is another bigger problem than gender for

me” (NGO06). However, some of them then contradicted themselves by sharing examples of issues regarding gender discrimination in NGO sectors.

Gender Discrimination

Most of the women leaders shared their experiences of gender discrimination in NGO sectors. They experienced issues of gender stereotyping, unequal pay, poor working conditions, fewer opportunities, lookism, and childbirth responsibilities. For example, NGO01, 38 years old with 11 years experience in NGOs, the founder of an NGO that assists sexual minority women, said:

In fact, most of the practitioners in NGOs in China are women, but the leaders are men. Why are most of the practitioners women? Because the income in this industry is low, and social workers are viewed as a female-type occupation. However, the leaders in these social organizations are men because the position of the person in charge actually has power, including higher salaries. (NGO01)

NGO02, 36 years old with seven years of work experience in NGOs, is the founder of an NGO working on quality education issues among ethnic minority adolescents. She also explained:

The pay and compensations are very low in our grassroots NGO. The work condition is not good. We work in rural areas. In Chinese society, men are expected to provide financial support to their families. Our NGO position is not attractive to young men or graduates because of the low pay and poor work condition in the rural area. This is not a competitive occupation. Also, this job does not have high social status. However, if you work in Foundations, there will be good pay and compensation. Foundations could provide better opportunities. And men are more likely to work in Foundations compared to the grassroots NGOs like ours. (NGO02)

And NGO05, 29 years old, with three years of work experience in NGOs, works in the NGO to address the issues regarding business and human rights area. She explained:

When I went to a meeting with my male assistant, others think my assistant is the leader or the person they should communicate with rather than me

because he is a male...Also, in some public speaking, most speakers are males. (NGO05)

Unequal pay between genders is another issue to show gender discrimination exists in NGOs. NGO03, 51 years old, has worked in NGOs for 13 years. She was the office head of an NGO for addressing gender issues. Her current position is the program policy officer in an international organization addressing agriculture issues. She said:

I experienced a problem that men and women are not given equal pay for equal work in my previous organization. I was in the same position as a male colleague. I found his salary was higher than mine, and it is not based on work abilities or work performance...Therefore, I reported this problem to HR. Then, they increased my salary, but it was still lower than the male colleague. (NGO03)

Besides less pay, women leaders also experienced fewer opportunities. For example, NGO01 said:

There was a one-year leadership development program. There were eight participants only including two females. In another leadership development program for sexual minorities, all of the participants were males in the very beginning. Latterly, there were not enough male applicants, and then they accept female applicants to participate in the program...One year, someone said it is not fair to women, then the program intentionally recruited female applicants...I think maybe there are two reasons. One reason is that there were fewer lesbian NGOs, fewer women might apply for the program. The other reason is that the leaders of the leadership development program were all men at the time, so women were not paid much attention to in leadership training. (NGO01)

Furthermore, women experienced gender-based lookism, which is physical appearance discrimination. Youthful looks are a negative factor for women leaders in the workplace.

Women's physical appearance is more likely to be judged. The problem exists not just in the NGOs sector but also in other industries...I am not tall. Although I am 37 years old, my face looks younger than my age, so my appearance is a problem at work. People think I am too young to carry out the project well, and they do not trust I have sufficient management capabilities. (NGO02)

Marriage and childbirth responsibilities are other barriers to women's career development. Women are discriminated against based on their marital status and childbearing potential.

In some NGOs, male leaders worry about women's marriage and childbirth. After a woman gives birth and takes her maternity leave, she will be dismissed or assigned to another position with lower pay but less workload. They think taking care of a baby will decrease job performance. For some grassroots NGOs, they do not have enough money to guarantee women's rights and benefits...However, I think society should take the responsibility and work with the organizations together to address the problem. (NGO06)

Work Context

It is important to understand work contextual factors when discussing gender issues in NGOs sections. Women leaders feel more challenges when they work in a male-dominated environment.

Our organization actually has to work with foundations and the government. Most of the heads of foundations or the government are mainly men. No matter what, you are naturally separated from them. For example, there is a grant United Nations agency, and the project officer is a male. If a man deals with him, it will definitely be easier. If a woman deals with him, he prefers to give the funding to the male.... Therefore, there are fewer women in the decision-making level positions, so there are actually restrictions for female practitioners in NGOs, and sometimes they are excluded. (NGO01)

And

I attended a conference a few days ago, and the challenge is very obvious. It is more like a middle-aged man who is a leader of an NGO in some fields or topics. At the conference, they call me a "young girl". It is very unprofessional. (NGO05)

And

In women NGOs, there are more women leaders. In fact, I haven't seen a male leader in the women NGOs. However, in the organizations in which I worked previously if they are not in the women issues field, then the

leaders are all males...However, in my current organization, I am the only female who works as a senior professional. (NGO03)

Support and Strategies for Leadership Development

All these women leaders shared their experience and perceptions of seeking support and strategies for their career success and leadership development.

Role Model

The women used role models in their workplaces as their emotional and professional support.

It is important to have women role models in the NGOs sector. They can send a very powerful signal to other women and make other women feel like it is possible to be a leader...There were some opportunities I can visit them one-on-one, so I asked questions related to working and learned from them. (NGO05)

Mentorship

Establishing a mentorship with an experienced professional was an important strategy to receive advice and support.

I have a mentor, and she provides me a lot of professional support. She taught me how to write a proposal. She leads me to write project proposals, project reports and helped me review and revised the proposals and reports. (NGO01)

And

There are a lot of women leaders in my family. They work in different fields with me, and they have many years of leadership experience. They taught me how to manage an organization, how to be a leader, how to address some complicated problems in the workplace, and how to communicate with people internally and externally. (NGO06)

And

I prefer to communicate with experienced professionals in the NGOs sector to learn from them and improve my abilities. When I worked in my last

position, I needed to work with different NGOs, so I have a lot of opportunities to communicate with some experts in the NGOs sector. I learn a lot through asking questions and practicing in the process. (NGO04)

Self-Efficacy

It was important for the participants to establish women's confidence in their ability to succeed. To overcome the challenges faced on their path to leadership positions, women leaders recognized the significance of self-efficacy.

I think that sometimes we women should not give ourselves such thoughts that I am a female, and I cannot do the same job and compete with men. Because I went out to work when I was 13 years old, and I have been working hard and improving myself...If you believe in yourself, you can actually show your abilities and talents, and you can do it...I do not care about others' opinions, and I don't think there is any difference between them and me. I believe I can do anything whatever men do... I think we should help women establish their confidence through making policies and education. (NGO02)

Leadership Development Training and Programs

Pursuing leadership development training and programs is another common strategy that helped the women expand their knowledge and skills and get ready for leadership positions.

When I started to prepare for a full-time position in the NGO, I participated in a program of team leadership. They provide one-year training in leadership development. The topics covered leadership models, project management, volunteer management, fundraising, strategic planning, etc. Then, I participated in another leadership development program for sexual minorities. I went to a queer center in Los Angeles for an internship for two months. I learned about how they operate and how they carry out the projects. They are very useful. (NGO01)

And

There is a lot of training, so I participated in a few training camps...Also, I meet and communicate with organizations related to capacity building. We learn from them. (NGO05)

And

I prefer to participate in leadership training provided by the business industry rather than the NGO sector. I can learn more from large companies...so I think it is important to go outside of the NGOs sector when you want to improve the leadership to see more possibilities. (NGO06)

Self-Directed Learning

Besides attending formal training, most women leaders mentioned they are self-directed learners. They keep learning to improve their leadership skills and professional knowledge. NGO06 said that “based on my experience, I improve myself through self-directed learning. I read a lot of books about sociology.” Also, NGO02 said that “I learned professional knowledge through taking some certification exams. I learn knowledge of marketing, management, and psychology through reading and online platform.” And another participant added:

First, I reviewed many cases in our database to learn negotiation skills and strategies. Then, I practice the skills at work. Also, I search for articles or video clips online to learn how to improve my negotiation skills. Second, I observe others in the workplace and immediately use what I learned to see if it works in my workplace. Third, since I do not have any educational background in management, so I have to improve my management skills through learning by doing. (NGO05)

Women Leaders' Efforts on Gender Equity and Equality

Several women leaders expressed they made efforts to improve gender equity and equality in NGOs. They provided training to their own employees and other organizations. For example, NGO05 said that “In our organization, we have training about gender equity and anti-sexual harassment...We also communicate with our employees to ask for feedback.”

NGO01 stated:

We provide gender equality education to many young people. We bring it to different fields, such as the disability field and environmental protection field. At least, it increases the awareness [of gender issues]. And young people will give us some feedback. Even a few words, we that at least there are still some changes, and the future can always be expected.

Women leaders would like to provide more opportunities to women in employment, development, and empowerment. For example, NGO06 said “I prefer to hire a woman in the recruitment, especially a woman with disabilities.” Another participant said:

In my team, I receive enough space and opportunities for career development and leadership development. However, for the NGOs sector, we are the generation who establish gender equity...In my organization, we prefer to provide opportunities for public speaking in conferences to female employees. We intentionally provide them more opportunities. (NGO05)

And

Most of our community is actually women. Generally speaking, women are not encouraged to express themselves and become leaders in China. In our own community, we often organize salons and gatherings among lesbians. Our salons and gatherings enhance women’s empowerment. The women, who have frequently participated in our activities, feel like easier for her to express her opinions...As a result, women in our community are particularly willing to express and refute some of the men’s views. Therefore, I think if we want to enhance the leadership of women. We can use our community’s story as an example. We should give women the opportunity to exercise or train this kind of expression, which may include empowerment, and let them know that they can express and have the right to express. We often have some gender equality discussions and salons in the community, and then they will realize this problem. (NGO01)

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Practice

Although NGOs in China have improved in past years, more effort is needed to develop work environments that increase women employees’ participation in leadership roles, improve opportunities for leadership development, and engender equality and equality (Gao, 2014). Therefore, it is important and necessary for NGOs to provide diversity and inclusion training that explores gender issues, discrimination, and stereotypes for their leaders and workers. NGOs should also establish a system or a mechanism that encourages and supports women to become leaders. Initiatives can include mentoring programs, women’s resource groups,

establishing more women leader role models, and special recruitment events that target women specific roles.

Feminist-inspired NGO activism is another mechanism that can be utilized to empower women in Chinese NGOs. Hsiung (2021) analyzed feminist praxis and NGO activism that was utilized to increase women's political participation in rural governance and found that there are some empowering practices for women. These include offering gender training workshops "to encourage women to step forward as candidates and succeed once they were elected" (p. 10). This type of training would be devoted to women to boost their confidence, assess their job competence and leadership qualities, and promote upward mobility as an aspirational goal.

It is necessary to increase communication between feminist NGOs and other NGOs to understand the importance of women's contributions and leadership in NGOs. Moreover, NGOs should increase the awareness of women's leadership and invest in management and leadership programs to help women develop and achieve their career goals. These programs can help women build their skills in managing complexity and encourage a cross-section of women in management and other executive positions.

For Policymakers

There are several ways that policymakers can address the lack of women leaders in NGOs in China. In order to ensure equity and inclusion, policies that promote the recruitment and promotion of Chinese women into leadership roles are needed. Organizations should be held accountable for implementing initiatives that create opportunities for women to secure positions and advance to higher levels with NGOs. Policies that consider work-life balance are also needed. Since women in China are still heavily responsible for rearing their children, there is a need for policies that ensure women are not penalized or overlooked due to family obligations. Women should be allowed the flexibility and freedom to pursue their career goals without fear of being stigmatized or stifled.

More government funding should be allocated to organizations that promote and support the empowerment of women leaders in China. This financial support will allow them to provide resources to enhance women's professional and career development, preparing them for roles that require higher-level skills and knowledge. The gender index should be used as a criterion to evaluate an NGO when the organization is funded or applies for funding.

For Future Research

With fewer women occupying leadership positions, most leadership studies reflect men's perspectives (McLean & Beigi, 2016). Also, the majority of previous studies focused on political issues of NGOs and the development of NGOs. There is very little research that studies women's leadership in the NGOs sector in China. Therefore, more empirical studies should be conducted to fill the gap in the research.

More research is needed to explore women's experiences in Chinese NGOs. This topic is an emerging area of interest as global diversity and inclusion efforts are being implemented in non-profit and non-governmental organizations. A larger sample of NGOs and more women within these organizations should be surveyed to learn of their intentions to pursue leadership roles, their opportunities, challenges, and support of their leadership development.

It is also important to research the impact of cultural factors on women's leadership development. For example, Chinese culture and society are influenced by Confucianism and collectivism. Therefore, future research questions may include: What is the role of Confucianism in women's leadership development in China? What is the role of collectivism in women's leadership development in China? How do women develop their leadership in the Chinese cultural context?

Finally, future research should explore the contextual factors that influence women's leadership development. For example, a study could be conducted to investigate the difference in the opportunities for women's leadership development in male-dominated organizations and female-dominated organizations.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we discussed the experiences of women leaders in Chinese NGOs, which included gender discrimination and a lack of opportunities, as well as their self-empowerment and self-efficacy. To increase women's participation in leadership positions in NGOs, it is important to establish gender equality and equity in workplaces via diversity training and initiatives. Education is always the sustainable way to empower women, increase awareness of gender issues, and improve women leaders' opportunities.

REFERENCES

- Adnane, M. (2012). *Women in leadership positions in the People's Republic of China*. GRIN. <https://www.grin.com/document/585300>
- Angel House. (2018a, June 14). 北湖校区 (儿童发展中心) [Beihu campus (Children development center)]. <http://www.cpangel.org.cn/newsitem/15752>
- Angel House. (2018b, June 14). 奥园校区 (青年发展中心) [Aoyuan campus (Youth development center)]. <http://www.cpangel.org.cn/%E5%84%BF%E7%AB%A5%E5%8F%91%E5%B1%95%E4%B8%AD%E5%BF%83-%E5%89%AF%E6%9C%AC>
- Angel House. (2020, July 27). 2019 安琪之家年度报告 [2019 Angel House annual report]. <http://www.cpangel.org.cn/newsitem/34991>
- Cai, Y. (2017, February 17). *Managing NGOs in China*. Asia Dialogue. <https://theasiadialogue.com/2017/02/17/managing-ngos-in-china/>
- Cao, Y. (2016, February 14). Guo Jianmei, Zhongze, and the empowerment of women in China. *China Change*. <https://chinachange.org/2016/02/14/guo-jianmei-zhongze-and-the-empowerment-of-women-in-china/>
- Chao, C.-C., & Ha, L. (2019). Asian women leadership a cross-national and cross-sector comparison. *Routledge*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429025815>
- Cheng, L. (2008). The key to success: English language testing in China. *Language Testing*, 25(1), 15–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532207083743>
- China Development Brief. (2018, July 10). *How an online platform aims to provide professional career advice to 40 million rural students*. <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/reports/how-an-online-platform-aims-to-provide-professional-career-advice-to-40-million-rural-students/>
- China File. (2017, September 27). *How are NGOs in China faring under the new law?* <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/how-are-ngos-china-faring-under-new-law>
- Corsetti, G. (2019, August 2). *How many NGOs are there really in China?* China Development Brief. <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/reports/how-many-ngos-are-there-really-in-china/>
- Edwards, L. (2000). Women in the People's Republic of China: New challenges to the grand gender narrative. In L. Edwards & M. Roces (Eds.), *Women in Asia: Tradition, modernity, and globalisation* (pp. 59–84). Routledge.
- Fang, H. (2019, May 22). *Measuring China's nonprofit sector*. The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/2019/05/22/measuring-chinas-nonprofit-sector/>
- Frenkel, S., & Kuruvilla, S. (2002). Logics of action, globalization, and changing employment relations in China, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines. *ILR Review*, 55(3), 387–412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001979390205500301>

- Gao, Y. (2014). 解读 2014 中国公益行业人才发展现状 [Understanding the current status of workforce in Chinese charities in 2014]. *China Social Organization*, 21, 25–27. <http://www.cqvip.com/read/read.aspx?id=663167979>
- Guo, T. (2015). *An oral history of Wang Xingjuan*. China Development Brief. <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/reports/oral-history-wang-xingjuan/>
- Hasmath, R. (2016, March 23). *China's NGOs go global*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/chinas-ngos-go-global/>
- He, J., & Wang, S. (2008). 中国式的社团革命—对社团全景图的定量描述 [China's association revolution – a quantitative description of the association panorama.]. In B. Gao & R. Yuan (Eds.), *中国公民社会发展蓝皮书 [Bluebook in civil society development in China]* (pp. 133–163). Peking University Press.
- Hsiung, P.-C. (2021). Feminist-inspired NGO activism in contemporary China: Expanding the inductive approach in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004211014617>
- Hsu, J. Y. J., & Hasmath, R. (2014). The local corporatist state and NGO relations in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 23(87), 516–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2013.843929>
- iFeng News. (2018, December 25). 学界商界共话“女性公益的创与变”: 性别意识应被激活和利用 [A discussion of “the innovations and changes of women’s charity” between academia and business: The awareness of gender should be activated and utilized]. <https://gongyi.ifeng.com/c/7ivUaKpOncO>
- iHEARu Charity Fund. (n.d.). 北京爱的分贝公益基金会理事会 [Beijing iHEARu Charity Fund Council]. <http://i-db.com.cn/aboutus/index.jhtml>
- Jennings, C. (2018). *A case study of women's leadership identity development in a community of practice in rural China* (Order No. 13880055) [Ph.D., North-central University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2235971402/abstract/BBEA8B171DCE4662PQ/1>
- Kasza, G. J. (1995). *The conscription society: Administered mass organizations*. Yale University Press.
- Li, H., Lo, C.W.-H., & Tang, S.-Y. (2017). Nonprofit policy advocacy under authoritarianism. *Public Administration Review*, 77(1), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12585>
- Liao, S. (2020). Feminism without guarantees: Reflections on teaching and researching feminist activism in China. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 26(2), 259–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2020.1769368>
- Lu, Y., & Li, R. (2020). Rebuilding resilient homeland: An NGO-led post-Lushan earthquake experimental reconstruction program. *Natural Hazards*, 104(1), 853–882. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-020-04194-3>
- Lu, Y., Wei, L., Cao, B., & Li, J. (2021). Participatory child-centered disaster risk reduction education: An innovative Chinese NGO program. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, ahead-of-print (ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-03-2020-0066>

- Mak, G. C. L. (2013). *Women, education, and development in Asia: Cross-national perspectives*. Routledge.
- McLean, G. N., & Beigi, M. (2016). The importance of worldviews on women's leadership to HRD. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 260–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641419>
- Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2020). 2019 年民政事业发展统计公报 [2019 Statistical communique on the development of Civil Affairs]. <http://images3.mca.gov.cn/www2017/file/202009/1601261242921.pdf>
- Right Livelihood. (2019). *Guo Jianmei*. <https://rightlivelihood.org/the-change-makers/find-a-laureate/guo-jianmei/>
- Shanxi Association of Women Marriage and Family Studies. (2015, September 14). 性别平等让公益更有效: 北京试妇会 20 周年民间峰会 [Gender equality makes charities more effective: Beijing World Women's Association 20th Anniversary]. *China Development Brief*. <http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/news-17975.html>
- Shen, Y. (2019). The research on the development path of female social organizations participating in social governance [Master's thesis, Zhejiang Gongshang University]. <http://gb.oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detailall.aspx?filename=1019100756.nh&dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFDREF>
- Sun, Y. (2017, October 22). *Why China has so few female leaders*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/22/asia/china-female-leaders/index.html>
- Tai, J. W. (2015). Chinese NGOs: Thriving amidst adversity. In J. W. Tai (Ed.), *Building Civil Society in Authoritarian China: Importance of Leadership Connections for Establishing Effective Nongovernmental Organizations in a Non-Democracy* (pp. 19–42). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03665-6_2
- Tsang, A. Y., Chan, P. S., & Zhang, L. (2011). Reconciling conflicts: The “accidental” women leaders in contemporary China. *Affilia*, 26(3), 314–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109911418441>
- Wang, Q. (2018). From “Non-governmental Organizing” to “Outer-system”—Feminism and Feminist Resistance in Post-2000 China. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 26(4), 260–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2018.1531058>
- Wang, Y. (2014, June 3). 安琪之家创办人王芳: 把慈善变成一种习惯 [The founder of Angel's Family, Fang Wang: Make charity as a habit]. *Xinhua Net*. http://www.gx.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2014-06/03/c_1110963138.htm
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global gender gap report 2021*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/>

- Xin, H. (n.d.). *Stars and Rain: Education services for autistic children*. British Council. <https://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/programmes/society/social-entrepreneurs/case-studies/stars-rain>
- Xu, J., Xu, D., Lu, Y., & Wang, Q. (2018). A bridged government–NGOs relationship in post-earthquake reconstruction: The Ya’an service center in Lushan earthquake. *Natural Hazards*, 90(2), 537–562. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-017-3056-3>
- Xu, Y. (2010, June 1). 女性参与让慈善更纯洁 [Women’s participation makes charities more pure]. China Foundation Center. <http://www.foundationcenter.org.cn/guanli/html/2010-06/655.html>
- Yang, J. (2015, September 1). 公益行业中社会性别现状和挑战 [The current status and challenge of gender issues in charities]. *China Development Brief*. <http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/news-17957.html>
- Zhao, J., & Jones, K. (2017). Women and leadership in higher education in China: Discourse and the discursive construction of identity. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(3), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7030021>
- Zhou, Y. (2010, August 12). Liao Xiaoyi: Greening the lifestyle. *Women of China*. <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/people/others/10/9410-1.htm>



China in an Asian Context

Xue Yang Coleman and Jessica Li 

CHINA IN AN ASIAN CONTEXT

Asia, as a fast-growing region, has been through rapid economic development. Particularly China, the largest economy in Asia and the second largest in the world, is adjusting to the transitions brought about by this rapid development. China has clearly benefited financially from a strong labor market, but the talent shortage has always been an issue. Zhang (2021) reported that mainland China has struggled with talent shortage year after year (Zhang, 2021). Increasing women's participation in the workforce could be a solution to China's talent shortage. In fact, increasing gender diversity in corporate leadership links directly to the improved business performance and environmental benefits (Liu, 2018; Moreno-Gómez et al., 2018). Firms with at least one woman on the

X. Y. Coleman (✉) · J. Li
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, USA
e-mail: xueyang3@illinois.edu

J. Li
e-mail: jli2011@illinois.edu

board significantly outperformed the others. Companies with a woman director are positively associated with its return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE) based on data from Asian corporations (Qian, 2016). Hence, women's roles in leadership are not only a gender equality issue, but also an important topic in corporate performance, and social development.

The gender gap in workforce participation in China has improved over recent history. China was ranked 69th on the 2021 Gender Gap Index on Economic Participant and Opportunity compared to its 92nd place in 2010 (World Economic Forum, 2021). The percentage of woman senior leaders in corporate boardrooms increased from 8% in 2016 to 13.8% in 2021 (Milhomem, 2022). China has the highest women labor force participant rate in the Asian Pacific's region (Asian Development Bank, 2017), while 61.8% of Chinese working-aged women were actively engaged in work or looking for work, which is higher than Japan (53.1%) and South Korea (53.07%). However, the World Bank (2022) reported a downward trend in Chinese women's labor participation since 2000, whereas an increasing trend is observed in Japan and South Korea. This reveals that the economic reforms in China might have brought some setbacks for women participating in the workforce. For example, post-reform care policies have reduced care benefits, especially for childcare and eldercare. This reduced care has disproportionately burdened women and reduced their workforce participation (Connelly et al., 2018). In China, cultural norms have always put more responsibilities on girls and women for the unpaid domestic work and eldercare (Asian Development Bank, 2017). This calls for action to review current policies and explore more innovative ways to empower and increase women's participation in the workforce, especially in leadership positions. Because of China's size and the interconnectedness of neighboring countries, China's human resource policies and social changes also affect other Asian countries. In this chapter, we focused on Chinese women's leadership in the context of Asia and compared the approaches for women's leadership empowerment between China and other Asian countries. We first adopted a comparative framework to discuss cultural, political, social, and economic contexts of women's leadership in China and other Asian countries. Second, we briefly reviewed the current state of women's leadership in Asia. Finally, we provided suggestions on how to develop women's leadership in decision making, vocational training, and career development at both organizational and national levels.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ASIA

In this section, we explored historical and cultural factors that have influenced women's leadership in Asia.

Overview of Asia

Asia is the largest and most diverse continent in the world. The geographical region of Asia can be categorized into six groups: Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Western Asia, and Northern Asia (Boudreau et al., 2012). Asian countries are diverse in culture, language, politics, and economy. Buddhism used to be the major influence in Asia, particularly in China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. As of 2010, Hinduism became the largest religious group in Asia. It is projected that, by 2050, the Muslim population will grow by about 50% and become the largest religious group in the Asia-Pacific region. The religious unaffiliated group, folk religion, and Buddhism are, and will continue to be, the majority, close to 90% of the population in China, Japan, and South Korea (Wormald, 2015).

The political landscape of Asia also varies. Colonialism and imperialism influenced most parts of Asia historically. Asia has multi-party democracies and repressive regimes. Although it is the fastest growing economic region, economic development is imbalanced. For example, Japan is one of the most developed and industrialized countries. China and India are the two emerging countries ranking the world's second and sixth largest economies (Silver, 2022). North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Myanmar, among others, are still plagued by repressive regimes, impoverishment, and war or isolation (Ero & Atwood, 2021). Central Asia countries are usually studied separately from other Asian countries because of their distinct culture and historical influences from Russia, China, European countries, and the US (Soutullo et al., 2021). Western Asia, known as the Middle East, is also very different from other Asian countries. In this chapter, we will focus our discussion and review on Eastern and Southern Asian countries.

Historically, China has close ties with Eastern and Southern Asian countries. Japan, Korea, and Vietnam have adopted Chinese characters in their language system for centuries (Kornicki, 2019). Confucianism unifies these countries on basic social and societal values (Weiming, 2017).

Over the past decade, China has been the leading engine for the overall prosperity and economic growth in Asia. China's massive infrastructure investment and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are expected to boost trade that runs from western China through Central Asia and South Asia to Europe (Freeman, 2021; Hoh, 2019). BRI will also transform China's influence on its immediate neighborhood in East Asia (Heiduk & Sakaki, 2019).

Regional and National Cultures

Although some of the Asian countries share historical and cultural ties with China, the differences in local and national cultures are still significant. Here we reviewed these differences based on two cross-cultural frameworks—the GLOBE project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Both frameworks are based on obsolete data, unfortunately. However, they are the only available frameworks. As such, caution must be exercised in understanding these frameworks in current contexts.

GLOBE Project and Leadership Style

GLOBE is short for global leadership and organizational behavior effectiveness. This collaborative research project studied cultural influences on societal leadership expectations and behaviors. In a study in 2014, researchers collected information from more than 1000 CEOs and 6000 top management team members from 24 countries (House et al., 2014). GLOBE used nine cultural dimensions for its intercultural leadership research: (1) performance orientation (community culture encourages, rewards, and improves performance, innovation, and excellence), (2) uncertainty avoidance (groups depend on social norms, procedures, and rules to reduce uncertainty of future events), (3) humane orientation (group reward qualities, such as fairness, altruism, generosity, kindness, and caring), (4) institutional collectivism (organizational or institutional culture encourages collective distribution of resources and actions), (5) in-group collectivism (individual's pride, loyalty, and dependence in their group, families, or organizations), (6) assertiveness (individuals being confrontational and aggressive in relation to others), (7) gender egalitarianism (individuals lead the group collectively to minimize gender inequality), (8) future orientation (groups favor and reward planning and delaying instant gratification and other future-oriented behaviors), and (9) power distance (group expectation of power being distributed

equally) (Moore, 2018). It categorized Asian countries into two groups: Confusion Asia and Southern Asia. China, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea belong to the Confusion Asia cluster. This group has high scores in the dimensions of power distance, institutional and in-group collectivism, which indicate that they endorse authority and power differentials for social order and stability. They have low scores on gender egalitarianism, which mean that they have a higher degree of gender inequality compared to other culture clusters. In general, Confucian Asian countries are very group- and family-oriented. Their cultures emphasize the value of clearly defined roles and a rigid structure of relationships. This cluster views leadership as charismatic, value-based, and team- and performance-oriented.

The Southern Asia group included India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. These countries highly value in-group collectivism, power distance, and humane orientation. They encourage individuals to show generous caring and fair treatment to others. Their cultures also have low scores on gender egalitarianism, which portrays a picture of a highly family- and group-oriented, men-dominated, and hieratical society.

In general, according to the data from the GLOBE 2004 and 2014 projects, Asian countries share the following societal leadership expectations and preferences: (1) endorsing authority and power distance between different levels in organizations and family, (2) emphasizing in-group loyalty in both organizations and relatives, and (3) accepting gender inequality (Chai et al., 2016; Fu et al., 2016).

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Besides the regional similarities in cultural dimensions, we can also generalize cultural values at the country level using Hofstede's model. Hofstede defined national culture as the collective programming of the mind that makes this collective group distinct from others. He initially explored the data from a large survey database of values and sentiments of IBM employees across 50 countries and identified national-level values (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). Hofstede (2011) continually updated the database based on other researchers' use of the base survey, proposed six dimensions in their cross-cultural studies of national culture. They are (a) power distance (degree to which people expect to distribute power unequally), (b) individualism versus collectivism (preference for individuals to take care of themselves or their immediate families versus their

loyalty to other groups to which they belong), (c) masculinity versus femininity (preferences of a society on achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and success in competition or in the opposite to collaboration, modesty, caring, and relationships), (d) uncertainty avoidance (how much a society can tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity), (e) long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation (individual choices of focus for their efforts either in the future or the present and past), and (f) indulgence versus restraint (how much freedom or control societies allow for natural gratification in life).

Hofstede's 6-D (dimension) model provides a framework to compare national cultures in those six dimensions. For example, we can compare China with Japan and South Korea as in Fig. 10.1.

As the figure illustrates, China, Japan, and South Korea share the similar national values on long-term orientation and indulgence. It suggests that the three countries focus more on long-term goals and do not indulge in short-term entertainment or quick wins. China scores higher in power distance than the other two countries. Chinese national culture prefers more hierarchy and structures than Japan and Korea. Scores in individualism show a similar preference on collective mindset for China and South Korea. Japan has a very high score on masculinity followed by China and South Korea. Japanese culture emphasizes achievement, assertiveness, and competitive power more than China and South

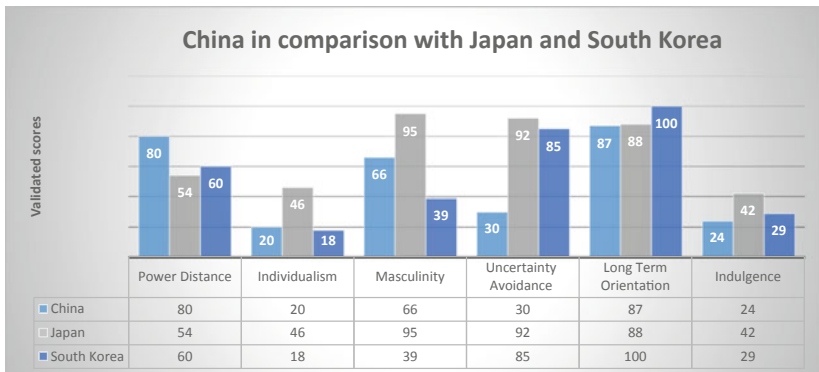


Fig. 10.1 China in comparison with Japan and South Korea using the Culture Compass tool (Data retrieved from <https://geert-hofstede.com/china.html>. Copyright 2016 by ITIM International. Reprinted with permission)

Korea. Korean culture is collaborative, modest, relationships building, and focused on maintenance. This figure presents a sharp contrast in uncertainty avoidance. China is very tolerant of uncertainty, whereas Japan and South Korea are more rigid and cannot tolerate ambiguous behaviors and ideas. This distinct cultural perspective speaks not only to social and organizational practices, but also to performing and the fine arts. For example, the traditional Chinese idiom, 难得糊涂(nan de hu tu; sometimes ignorance is bliss, so don't try to be wise and calculate everything) contrasts with Japan's landscape design that tells us that every little element is a symbol and has its unique role and meaning.

Confucianism, Communist Ideology, and Other Cultural Values

Prejudice against women has been pervasive in traditional value systems in Asian countries. Confucianism ideology has been explained as the driving force in traditional feudal dynasties in China where marriage was bondage of women, being treated as men's possessions (Littlejohn, 2017). 男尊女卑(nan zun nv bei) means that men are superior to women, a concept that is deeply rooted in Confucian social values. Especially in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912 CE), where sexual immorality was pervasive, the controlling authority promoted stricter rules for women, leading to twisted practices, such as “三寸金莲”(san cun jin lian), three-inch golden lotus feet. Women needed to bind their feet to the point of broken bones and limited growth of their feet to be no more than three inches long. Before the end of the Qing Dynasty, women's education was confined to the teaching of social ethics and family traditions so that they would become a good wife and mother (Dworkin, 2018).

The fight for women's liberty has had some victories since then in China. The first women's movement in China was the May Fourth Movement (1915–1921 CE) to fight for free choice of marriage and the end of polygamy. Early Communist thinkers and leaders influenced the May Fourth Movement; the main support was from the intellectual class in urban China (Schwartz, 2020). However, unlike feminists, Communists did not consider the patriarchal family as the core issue of prejudice against women. They believed that woman's emancipation depends on their involvement and participation in the workforce. The Communist ideology on women focused women's legal and political equality, workforce labor participation, and civic engagement. Women's oppression was attributed to systems of capitalism and private property (Harsch, 2014). Therefore, later Communist Party leaders in China combined the efforts

of peasant liberation and women's emancipation together to fight in class struggle. Marxist-Leninist-Maoist views of gender equality significantly influenced early gender relations in China. The Chinese Communist Party prioritized the goal of women's equality and mobilized movements in the 1930s and 1940s (Sun, 2017).

After 1949, the Chinese government undertook legal reform to abandon arranged marriages and subordination of self to family and marriage. In 1950, it issued the New Marriage Law to end marriages by proxy and stopped rural Chinese women from being sold to property owners (Zhang, 2019). Nevertheless, women's identity was strictly controlled by the government and its national policies. Senses and voices of self-awareness were still underdeveloped. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, gender was considered erased in the name of equality (Li, 2020). Mao's slogan, 'The times have changed, men and women are the same' (时代不同了, 男女都一样), was highly promoted for political purposes. Gender neutrality was portrayed so women had similar strength and power to do the same work as men (Zheng, 2020). During the Urban Sent-Down Movement, women were encouraged to sacrificially marry rural peasants to change their social status and embrace the different social status (Yang & Yan, 2017). The Urban Sent-Down Movement happened from 1967 to 1978 during the Cultural Revolution. During this period, more than 17 million urban youth in China were systematically migrated to the rural countryside. Many of them were middle or high school teenagers who left the academic education environment and their family to be educated in the open classroom of the rural countryside. The negative impacts of the Cultural Revolution were enormous and are still experienced by individuals and families today.

In the post-Mao era, Deng's theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics led to a series of gender reforms. They were based on presumed biological differences between the genders. For example, Labor Insurance Regulations in 1984 stated that women should be entitled to five years of early retirement in high-risk occupations. This particular policy has led to discrimination in recruitment and selection of women (Sun & Li, 2017). Women were especially disadvantaged in the economic restructuring. More women than men were laid off. They were forced to retire younger than men and receive less social support. The chances for them to be rehired were scarce (Roy, 2019). In the post-reform era, after 1977, capitalism and individualism influenced Chinese social values.

In modern China, Japan, and South Korea, the traditional patriarchal structures have been merged with current values, yet they still impede women's self-development. For example, Asian cultures in general put more pressure on women than men in terms of outward appearances. Parents might express explicit comments on their daughters' look and/or implicit expectations (Kawamura, 2012). Women must be the icons of fashion and beauty and still take care of housework and childcare. The booming business of fashion salon, fitness centers, makeup, and plastic surgery are some examples (Kim & Lee, 2018). The pressure to get married is unusually high for single Chinese women. When a single woman passes the age of late 20s, they are considered incomplete and leftover (Chen, 2016). In part, this is due to the huge surplus of single men of marriage age as a result of the one-child policy and preference for a male child. This social pressure discourages Chinese women from pursuing their dreams and career advancement. The more powerful and capable a single woman is, the harder for her to find the right man to marry. Chinese men would prefer a more submissive, young, and beautiful wife instead of a competitor whose social and economic status threaten their supremacy.

This is also true in other Asian countries where traditional patriarchal values of women joined forces with modern individualism, causing new struggles and pressure. South Korea has the highest rate of plastic surgery per capita in the world (Baer, 2015). Objectified beauty has been widely accepted in Korea and other Eastern Asian countries. The Confucian code of ethical conduct is deeply rooted in social relationships and business activities in Korea. Respect for and obedience to seniors are highly valued to maintain social order. High loyalty to the leader is also required (Choi & Woo, 2018). Korean working mothers struggle to maintain their professional work and their traditional values in their daily lives. Work and family balance is a constant struggle, especially in Korea. Among OECD countries, Korea has the longest working hours with husbands spending the shortest time on housework. Korean mothers are also under social pressure to raise their children to achieve high academic performance in school, which is the pathway to professional success (Cho et al., 2015). When a working mother withdraws from her work to help the children to achieve academic success, it causes much more career damage than maternity leave alone.

Confucianism also influences Japan. The values of showing respect for and obedience to leaders correspond with highly paternalistic attitudes

towards subordinates. Japanese organizations are extremely hierarchical and structurally rigid (Xi, 2018). Japanese society assesses women on the value of their motherhood even when they join the workforce. Most Japanese men and mainstream media portray an ideal image of Japanese women who enjoy the home as their principal status and power. Husbands hand off their paychecks to their wives who take care of finances and housework of the family. Japanese mothers often assume the full responsibility for rearing and education of the children. If a woman wants to pursue a managerial career track, she must choose between marriage and a men-dominated workplace (Kobayashi et al., 2017).

CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN CHINA AND OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Along with economic growth and welfare in Asia, more and more women have gained access to education and participation in the workforce. However, there is an obvious disparity of women's labor participation rate in Asia. In 2020, 72% of women from age 25–54 were in the labor force in South-East Asia, whereas there were only 29% in Central Asia and Southern Asia (Gammarano, 2020). United Nations Development Programs created three indexes to measure and assess the current human development of a country: Human Development Index (HDI) (including healthy life, education, and standard of living). HDI also covers the Gender Development Index (GDI) (gender gaps in health, knowledge, and living standards), and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) (gender inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status). According to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2020), Singapore, Hong Kong (China), South Korea, and Japan are very high in human development indexes. China, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam are countries with high human development indexes. India, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, and Myanmar are in the medium human development indexes. In general, the Eastern Asian region has a higher value than the South Asian regions in HDI, GDI, and GII. Central Asian countries team up with other European developing countries in the data. As expected, they were heavily influenced by European social and economic development and outperformed other developing countries in Asia. Although China has more women in parliament or government seats and women's labor force participation rate, overall gender development is still lower than South Korea and Japan.

Traditional values and social norms are still the major impeding factors for gender equality and women's leadership development in Asia. Traditional gender roles remain untangled and resistant to change. In the legal realm, inheritance laws and traditions are still prevalent and disfavor women. For example, in Bangladesh, the Hindu communities' women cannot inherit property. There is a tendency for women not to claim their inheritance (Begum, 2018). Similarly, in Pakistan, according to Islamic laws, women inherit less than men siblings (Bacha, 2022). In Vanuatu, women are not involved in decision-making processes for land management and control (Peralta, 2022). Sex selection abortion and son preferences over the years have caused socio-economic damage to China and India (Eklund & Purewal, 2017). It has significantly shrunk women's talent pool.

Domestic work is the main responsibility of women, constraining women's social and career mobility. Young women professionals are under pressure to choose between marriage and their career. This is a factor contributing to the non-marriage surge in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Singapore. It is bad news for countries battling with the issue of an aging society. Meanwhile, due to the extremely competitive educational system in Asian countries, working mothers take leave from work to coach their children through exam preparation. Cases like that can be found in China, South Korea, Japan, and Singapore, among others.

Work and life balance become difficult for women employees, e.g., Korean mothers (Cho et al., 2015). Although policies like maternity leave and flexible working hours are in place, there are obstacles and limitations to use them. For example, in Singapore, using these benefits is a sign of reduced commitment to work. In addition, lack of a home office and privacy makes it difficult for mothers to stay at home and focus on work (The Economist Corporate Network, 2016). While some have reported that the new generation of Chinese women would no longer sacrifice their careers for their husbands, but they will do so for their children (China News Network, 2020).

Asian women also struggle with low confidence due to traditional social norms. Asian women were not encouraged to be outspoken and were inhibited from competition for advancement to leadership positions. When women are in leadership position at work, men may feel insecurity (Ro, 2020). In China, women leaders from the baby-boom generation have not pursued their careers at the expense of their family. They have coordinated their careers with the needs of their husbands and

delicately handled husband and wife relationships (Tsang et al., 2011). As mentioned earlier, the younger generation of women may choose to pursue their career over marriage (Chinese News Network, 2020).

There are also some promising drivers that empower and develop women leaders in Asia. First, the increasing incomes and social welfare benefits allow urban Asian families to have affordable household help. Wealth created from economic development has allowed both the governments and families to invest more in high quality childcare and eldercare. Thus, there is an increase in high quality professional development and facilities for childcare and eldercare. Second, economic growth also boosts the education and graduation rates of girls. It theoretically provides a good starting point to enlarge the talent pool to develop future women leaders. Third, Asian countries have witnessed more changes in legislation and economic policies. For example, the South Korea Supreme Court abolished the legal basis for the traditional preference for men in the family registry system in 2005. The family registration system (*hoju* in Korean) was introduced in 1953 to register all family members under the *family head*. In the patriarchal system, only men and sons of the family could be the family head (*hojus*). Daughters would be registered in their husbands' families when they got married. Women would not inherit the position of the family head unless there are no surviving men in the family (Koh, 2008). Other normative changes in South Korea included women leaders' preeminent presence in both the political realm and the business community (Tuminez et al., 2012). The number of women-owned startups in South Korea tripled between 2008 and 2016 (Korea Venture Business Association, 2017). Both individual abilities (i.e., positive outlook and industry expertise) and the contextual resources (i.e., family support and government's family-friendly policy) contribute to the career success of women entrepreneurs in South Korea (Cho et al., 2020a, 2020b).

The Japanese government expects women to play a more vital role in the workforce to revive the Japanese economy. Specific strategies were put in place to: (1) increase the availability of day care and after-school care, (2) recruit and monitor women's career development in both government and corporations, and (3) review and revise tax and social security systems to be neutral to encourage women's work participation (Chanlett-Avery & Nelson, 2014). In Japan, working age women's (age of 25–54) labor participation rate increased from 66.5% in 2000 to 76.3% in 2016 (Shambaugh et al., 2017). More access to quality daycare facilities has

increased Japanese women's maternal employment rate (Nishitateno & Shikata, 2017). Fourth, as information communication technology (ICT) continues to advance, it gradually changes the way people interact with each other in life and work. Flexible hours has become more acceptable in organizational culture where virtual teamwork and remote collaboration are common. ICT-based networking is one of the best tools to empower women entrepreneurs in developing countries (Sardar et al., 2019; UNCTAD, 2014). ICT also makes the influence of the women's movement from North America and Europe more attainable. Multinational corporations based in Asian countries have the freedom to carry out a global campaign and promote women leaders' representation in management and the boardroom. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a major factor in moving companies to experience virtual platforms, allowing more women to work from home.

STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP EMPOWERMENT

To increase women's participation in senior management positions in Asia takes persistence in approach and holistic in strategies. Progress towards this goal requires actions and commitment from government, business sectors, the public, and women.

From our review of the past and current statuses of women's leadership development, traditional gender stereotypes are still deeply rooted in China and many other Asian countries. They not only influence familial relationships and marriages, but also Asian women's identity. We encourage developing holistic strategies to promote gender equality in domestic care, education, legislation, and business practices to benefit both women and men. This will empower and encourage women to enter the workforce and create a balanced view of both genders inside and outside of the family unit. In China, President Xi determined to embrace and promote Confucianism as the state ideology. Many western media criticized this initiative as it will cause more harm for women's rights in China (Confucius says, Xi does, 2015). The task could be risky if the Chinese government and society adopt the traditional philosophy without moderations. However, it might not be the case. Modern Confucianism starts to form a much healthier view on womanhood. Gender equality in modern Confucianism is neither about masculinity nor feminism. Men and women are both honorable beings under Heaven. They are inherently

distinct in biological, psychological, and social forms. Modern Confucianism rejects any one-sidedness. Instead, it emphasizes the unity and collaboration between man and women to achieve human reproduction, prosperity, and happiness (Wang, 2011). If China could continue to cultivate this healthy view of gender in career development, marriage, child, and senior care, it is possible to empower women to take more leadership roles and gain the support from their counterparts.

On the other hand, consistent commitment from the government and business leaders is very crucial for women leaders' development in Asia. To include women in powerful network circles and boardrooms will change the dynamics and norms of leadership teams. It might also challenge the traditional methods of business management and leadership practices. Therefore, we encourage the continuous efforts in business practice and research on issues of diversity, women leadership, and change management. We need more close collaboration between research and business practice on these matters and more measurable actions to be in place. Regarding public policies, it would be beneficial to expand the mandatory law of parental leave and childcare and promote equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities between husbands and wives. We also advise the re-examination of the social security systems to encourage both genders' workforce participation.

Organizational policies and developmental programs are suggested both within corporations and across agencies and industries. Some organizations have already started talent management programs and strategies. For example, sponsors/mentorship programs for women leadership candidates, data-driven recruitment, talent development strategies for women employees, and building up a support network of women leaders' role models are all positive steps in developing women leaders. Asian countries could also take advantage of the fast growing ICT, the potential of open source online education (e.g., massive open online courses) and other micro-credential opportunities for workforce development. Online skills and vocational training and certification programs for women would also benefit their career development even if they are still on maternity leave and in career transition. Other services, such as job matching, career counseling, and sponsorship would also help overcome information constraints, bargain for better wages and working conditions, and increase employability and social networks (Ang, 2019; Tuminez et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

Developing a leader takes time and support. To empower women taking leadership roles requires commitment and effort from both genders in the family, organization, and society. Both men and women need to review and recognize the differences in their strengths and weaknesses humbly. A model for Asian women's leadership development is needed; it will not entirely resemble western leadership development models or the western women's movement. Asian women should learn to voice their opinions and demonstrate their power and confidence in their own identity and roles in families, organizations, and society. Gender equality starts from within and from each individual household. Family and marriage should maintain integrity with balanced gender roles in which men and women can collaborate and share leadership roles both at home and in the workplace.

REFERENCES

- Ang, J. (2019). Career sponsorship: An effective way for developing women leaders. In S. Sendjaya (Ed.), *Leading for high performance in Asia* (pp. 89–105). Springer.
- Asian Development Bank. (2017). *Gender equality and the labor market: Women, work, and migration in the People's Republic of China*. <https://www.adb.org/publications/gender-equality-women-migration-prc>
- Bacha, U. (2022, March 5). Women's right to inheritance is enshrined in Islam and the law – why do they still have to fight for it? *DAWN*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1678231>
- Baer, D. (2015, September 22). Why South Korea is the plastic surgery capital of the world. *Business Insider*. <http://www.businessinsider.com/south-korea-is-the-plastic-surgery-capital-of-the-world-2015-9>
- Begum, F. (2018). Analyzing Hindu women's right to property in Bangladesh: Absolute interest versus limited interest. *Kathmandu School of Law Review*, 6(1), 103–116. <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/kslr/article/view/30766>
- Boudreau, D., McDaniel, M., Sprout, E., & Turgeon, A. (2012). *Asia: Human geography*. National Geographic Society. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/asia-human/>
- Chai, D. S., Jeong, S., Kim, J., Kim, S., & Hamlin, R. G. (2016). Perceived managerial and leadership effectiveness in a Korean context: An indigenous qualitative study. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 33(3), 789–820. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-016-9476-x>

- Chanlett-Avery, E., & Nelson, R. M. (2014). "Womenomics" in Japan: In brief. *Current Politics and Economics of Northern and Western Asia*, 23(4), 4–11. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc462468/ml/1/high_res_d/R43668_2014Aug01.pdf
- Chen, H. (2016, April 8). Emotional advert about China's 'leftover women' goes viral. *BBC*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35994366>
- China News Network. (2020, November 16). According to the report, nearly 90% of the surveyed married women were asked about their family planning when applying for job. *Sina*. <https://news.sina.com.cn/o/2020-11-16/doc-iiiznctke1742029.shtml>
- Cho, Y., McLean, G. N., Amornpipat, I., Chang, W. W., Hewapathirana, G. I., Horimoto, M., ... & Hamzah, S. R. A. (2015). Asian women in top management: Eight country cases. *Human Resource Development International*, 18(4), 407–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2015.1020717>
- Cho, Y., Han, S. J., Park, J., & Kang, H. (2020a). Business startups and development of South Korean women entrepreneurs in the IT industry. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 22(2), 176–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422320907047>
- Cho, Y., Park, J., Han, S. J., Sung, M., & Park, C. (2020b). Women entrepreneurs in South Korea: Motivations, challenges and career success. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 45(2/3), 97–119. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-03-2020-0039>
- Choi, E., & Woo, J. (2018). Confucian legacies and the meaning of democracy in South Korea: A cultural interpretation. *Korea Observer*, 49(3), 493–515. <https://doi.org/10.29152/KOIKS.2018.49.3.493>
- Confucius says, Xi does. (2015, July 25). *The Economist*. <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21659753-Communist-party-turns-ancient-philosophy-support-confucius-says-xi-does>
- Connelly, R., Dong, X. Y., Jacobsen, J., & Zhao, Y. (2018). The care economy in post-reform China: Feminist research on unpaid and paid work and well-being. *Feminist Economics*, 24(2), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2018.1441534>
- Dworkin, A. (2018). Gynocide: Chinese footbinding. In A. M. Jaggar (Ed.), *Living with Contradictions* (pp. 213–220). Routledge.
- Eklund, L., & Purewal, N. (2017). The bio-politics of population control and sex-selective abortion in China and India. *Feminism & Psychology*, 27(1), 34–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353516682262>
- Ero, C., & Atwood, R. (2021, December 29). 10 conflicts to watch in 2022. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/29/ukraine-ethiopia-iran-nuclear-afghanistan-myanmar-10-conflicts-2022/>

- Freeman, C. (2021). *The new Asia*. Institute for Security & Development Policy. <https://www.isdp.eu/content/uploads/2021/02/New-Asia-FA-C.-Freeman-22.02.21.pdf>
- Fu, P., Liu, J., Ji, X., Zhong, S., & Yu, G. (2016). Leading in a highly competitive environment: Effects of CEO confident leadership on follower commitment in China. *Frontiers of Business Research in China*, 10(2), 149–175. <https://doi.org/10.3868/s070-005-016-0007-4>
- Gammarano, R. (2020, March 3). Having kids sets back women’s labour force participation more so than getting married. *International Labour Organization*. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/having-kids-sets-back-womens-labour-force-participation-more-so-than-getting-married/>
- Harsch, D. (2014). Communism and women. In S. A. Smith (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the history of Communism* (pp. 488–504). Oxford University Press.
- Heiduk, F., & Sakaki, A. (2019). Introduction to the special issue—China’s belt and road initiative: The view from East Asia. *East Asia*, 36(2), 93–113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-019-09312-y>
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, Unit 2. <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/vol2/iss1/8>
- Hoh, A. (2019). China’s belt and road initiative in Central Asia and the Middle East. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 28(2), 241–276. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12191>
- House, R. J., Dorfman, P. W., Javidan, M., Hanges, P. J., & De Luque, M. F. S. (2014). *Strategic leadership across cultures: GLOBE study of CEO leadership behavior and effectiveness in 24 countries*. Sage Publications.
- Kawamura, K. Y. (2012). Body image among Asian Americans. In T. Cash (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of body image and human appearance* (pp. 95–102). Elsevier.
- Kim, S., & Lee, Y. (2018). Why do women want to be beautiful? A qualitative study proposing a new “human beauty values” concept. *PLoS ONE*, 13(8), e0201347. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0201347>
- Kobayashi, T., Honjo, K., Eshak, E. S., Iso, H., Sawada, N., & Tsugane, S. (2017). Work–family conflict and self-rated health among Japanese workers: How household income modifies associations. *PLoS ONE*, 12(2), e0169903. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0169903>
- Koh, E. (2008). Gender issues and Confucian scriptures: Is Confucianism incompatible with gender equality in South Korea? *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 71(2), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X08000578>
- Korea Venture Business Association. (2017). *2017 Survey of venture firm*. <https://www.venture.or.kr/api/attach/download/NEWS/1514508807094745>

- Kornicki, P. (2019). Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In S. Eliot & J. Rose (Eds.), *A companion to the history of the book* (pp. 253–268). Blackwell Publishing.
- Li, Z. (2020). *Gender hierarchy of masculinity and femininity during the Chinese Cultural Revolution: Revolutionary opera films*. Routledge.
- Littlejohn, L. J. (2017). *Confucianism: How analects promoted patriarchy and influenced the subordination of women in East Asia* [Paper presentation]. Young Historians Conference. <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/younghistorians/2017/oralpres/9>
- Liu, C. (2018). Are women greener? Corporate gender diversity and environmental violations. *Journal of Corporate Finance*, 52, 118–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2018.08.004>
- Milhomem, C. (2022). *Women on boards: Progress report 2021*. MSCI. <https://www.msci.com/www/women-on-boards-2020/women-on-boards-progress-report/02968585480>
- Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. (2012). Hofstede's fifth dimension: New evidence from the World Values Survey. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 43(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220221110388567>
- Moore, B. T. (2018). Literature review of GLOBE's CLT: Culturally endorsed implicit leadership theory. *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 11(1), 1–13. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/voll1iss1/Vol11Iss1_ELJ_Full_Issue.pdf#page=9
- Moreno-Gómez, J., Lafuente, E., & Vaillant, Y. (2018). Gender diversity in the board, women's leadership and business performance. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 33(2), 104–122. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-05-2017-0058>
- Nishitateno, S., & Shikata, M. (2017). Has improved daycare accessibility increased Japan's maternal employment rate? Municipal evidence from 2000–2010. *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies*, 44, 67–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jjie.2017.04.002>
- Peralta, A. (2022). The role of men and women in agriculture and agricultural decisions in Vanuatu. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.344>
- Qian, M. (2016). *Women's leadership and corporate performance*. Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2737833
- Ro, C. (2020, August 16). The docility myth flattening Asian women's careers. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200807-the-docility-myth-flattening-asian-womens-careers>
- Roy, S. (2019). Discriminatory laws against women: A survey of the literature. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, (8719). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3324761>

- Sardar, T., Jianqiu, Z., Bilal, M., Akram, Z., & Shahzad, K. (2019). Revolution of ICT: Women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. *Human Systems Management*, 38(4), 357–364. <https://doi.org/10.3233/HSM-190490>
- Schwartz, B. I. (2020). *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement*. BRILL.
- Shambaugh, J., Nunn, R., & Portman, B. (2017). *Lessons from the rise of women's labor force participation in Japan*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/lessons-from-the-rise-of-womens-labor-force-participation-in-japan/#:~:text=Some%20of%20the%20increase%20in,from%202.8%20to%204.5%20percent>
- Silver, C. (2022). *The top 25 economies in the world*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/>
- Soutullo, Jo., Gazzina, S., & Rinaldi, N. (2021). *Central Asia*. Fact Sheets on the European Union. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/178/central-asia>
- Sun, X. (2017). New life meets real life: Chinese women in nation building and state making, 1934–1949. *Frontiers of History in China*, 12(04), 538–565. <https://doi.org/10.3868/s020-006-017-0026-0>
- Sun, J. Y., & Li, J. (2017). Women in leadership in China: Past, present, and future. In Y. Cho, R. Ghosh, J. Y. Sun, & G. N. McLean (Eds.), *Current Perspectives on Asian Women in Leadership* (pp. 19–35). Springer.
- The Economist Corporate Network. (2016). *Women in leadership in Asia Pacific*. http://ftp01.economist.com/hk/ECN_papers/WiL_Asia
- The World Bank. (2022). *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (national estimate) – East Asia & Pacific*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.NE.ZS?locations=Z4>
- Tsang, A. Y., Chan, P. S., & Zhang, L. (2011). Reconciling conflicts: The “accidental” women leaders in contemporary China. *Affilia*, 26(3), 314–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109911418441>
- Tuminez, A. S., Duell, K., & Majid, H. A. (2012). *Rising to the top? A report on women's leadership in Asia*. National University of Singapore. <http://sites.asiasociety.org/womenleaders/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Rising-to-the-Top.pdf>
- UNCTAD. (2014). *Empowering women entrepreneurs through information and communications technologies: A practical guide*. http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtstict2013d2_en.pdf
- UNDP. (2020). *Human development report 2020: The next frontier, human development and the Anthropocene*. <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- Wang, T. (2011). Towards a proper relation between men and women: Beyond masculinism and feminism. In R. Fan (Ed.), *The Renaissance of Confucianism in contemporary China* (pp. 91–107). Springer.

- Weiming, T. (2017). Implications of the rise of “Confucian” East Asia. In S. N. Eisenstadt (Ed.), *Multiple modernities* (pp. 195–218). Routledge.
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global gender gap report 2021*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- Wormald, B. (2015). *The future of world religions: Population growth projections, 2010–2050*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/asia-pacific/>
- Xi, J. (2018). Representations and origins of the cultural differences regarding hierarchy between Chinese and Japanese employees in the workplace. *International Business and Management*, 16(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.3968/10588>
- Yang, W., & Yan, F. (2017). The annihilation of femininity in Mao’s China: Gender inequality of sent-down youth during the Cultural Revolution. *China Information*, 31(1), 63–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X17691743>
- Zhang, M. (2021). *Employers in mainland China anticipate the strongest labor market in six years during Q3 2021, but talent shortages escalate*. ManpowerGroup. https://www.manpowergroup.com/wcm/connect/b3bdcc93-3364-453f-81b4-03618fc7d774/CN_EN_Release_3Q21.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-b3bdcc93-3364-453f-81b4-03618fc7d774-nFfYLBQ
- Zhang, Y. J. (2019). Culture, institutions and the gender gap in competitive inclination: Evidence from the communist experiment in China. *The Economic Journal*, 129(617), 509–552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/econj.12596>
- Zheng, W. (2020). Women in the Chinese enlightenment: Oral and textual histories. *University of California Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520922921>



China in a Non-Asian Context

Jie Ke and Millard J. Bingham

Women make up almost half of the world population (Anonymous, 2021). Yet, this is not the case when examining the gender of those in leadership/management positions. Men continue to dominate leadership positions and women still lag far behind their men counterparts. The think manager-think male paradigm is prevalent not only in China, but also around the globe (Ryan et al., 2011; Schein et al., 1996; Sczesny, 2003). Men are perceived to be more appropriate and effective in leadership positions although it has been shown to be a myth in many research studies (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Shen & Joseph, 2021). However, the display of such gender role stereotyping, implicit/explicit, and its impact on women's participation and their success in leadership

J. Ke (✉) · M. J. Bingham
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA
e-mail: jie.ke@jsums.edu

M. J. Bingham
e-mail: millard.j.bingham@jsums.edu

positions vary from country to country under the influence of many contextual factors and the interactions among those factors (Engen et al., 2001; Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2013). In China, the prevalent leadership style associated with women leaders is benevolent leadership (i.e., caring about subordinates' well-being) because it is congruent with women's gender-stereotyped characteristics in the Confucius society (Wang et al., 2013). In the U.S. and some other western countries where Christianity is deeply embedded in the culture, leaders with stereotypical masculine characteristics and management styles are more likely to move up to top leadership positions and be successful, and it is generally acceptable for women to take leadership roles (Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2013).

The past two decades witnessed a growing interest in studying women's leadership, especially in China where fast economic growth demands a higher level of women's participation in the workforce. However, a systematic review of literature has revealed that global women's leadership in context, especially for developing countries and/or emerging economies, is still an understudied area (Bullough, 2008; Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2013). Country/nationality has been proposed as the best unit of analysis in contextual leadership study. Therefore, it would be meaningful to compare women's leadership development across countries. The chapter focuses on non-Asian countries, and countries studied include Australia, Brazil, Sweden, and the United States. Within each country, however, there is no one stream of logic that can explain everything due to the differences demographically and geographically. Therefore, instead of attempting to generalize, the researchers present what has been manifested through the literature on women leaders worldwide, on women's leadership development in context and how contextual factors promoted and prevented the development of leaders. The purpose of this chapter is to showcase how contextual factors impact women's participation and performance in China and selected non-Asian countries.

Data in this chapter were collected through searching the most recently published major international business journals, as well as the most recently published secondary data sources, including the World Bank World Development Indicators (WBWDI), the World Bank Enterprise Survey (WBES), the United Nation Human Development Indicators (UNHDI), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Economic Forum (WEF), the World Bank Doing Business Project (WBDB), Global Leadership and Organizational

Behavior Effectiveness Research Project (GLOBE), and Social Axioms Survey (SAS). In this chapter, we study women leaders in business because developing business women leaders is critical to the growth of the economy (Bullough, 2008).

Context factors closely related to women's leadership participation and widely used in literature are economic, social, cultural, and political. The scope of each contextual factor is defined next. The factors and subfactors are mainly summarized from World Gender Gap Reports of World Economic Forum (WEF, 2017, 2018, 2020–2022) and Gender Inequality Repors (UNDP, 2022).

ECONOMIC FACTOR

In the economic context, we look mainly at the country's basic economic systems (capitalist/socialist); the nation's GDP or GNP; labor force participation (employment and unemployment rate); average number of temporary workers; average number of permanent full-time workers, or number of full-time women workers, if available; income inequality index, if available; the country's business environment, such as opportunities for new businesses and new products; credit extended to the private sector; and access to affordable suppliers, contactors, and professional, legal, and banking services.

SOCIAL FACTOR

In the social context, we look mainly at education systems (literacy, mean years of schooling); women's roles and status in the family, which impacts the work-family balance of women leaders (discriminatory family code and violence against women); how women leaders are perceived in society, community, family, and among friends; human capital (the total combined education of boys/men from primary through tertiary schools); the age of the population and human health.

CULTURAL FACTOR

Leung, et al. (2005) defined culture as “values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns of a national group” (p. 357). In this study, we use this definition as it focuses on culture at the national level. In this category, we look mainly at cultural values and practices; major religions/

ideologies/beliefs (collectivism vs. individualism; uncertainty avoidance, gender stereotypes, gender egalitarianism, women's self-efficacy); and how women are perceived based on these characteristics.

POLITICAL FACTOR

In the political context, what we primarily examine are basic political system; women's political voice, which can be defined as having a voice in society and an ability to influence governmental policy at the city, state, and national level. Political voice is also synonymous with having political participation and the ability to fully engage in public life. For women to have adequate political voice, they must be free from the risk of violence, have freedom of movement, and have decision-making over family formation (Markham, 2013); political freedom (based on both individual civil liberties and political rights) (Bullough & De Luque, 2015); and policies on gender equality and/or workforce gender diversity.

CONTEXT MATTERS

Brief Overview of Chinese Context

Economic

China is a socialist country with a GDP per capita of USD\$16,400 in 2020 (CIA, 2022). Deng Xiaoping, China's permanent leader from 1978 until 1989 and reformist who initiated the idea of socialism with Chinese characteristics and economic reform since 1978. He also established the one-child policy in 1979 to limit population growth. Although the policy did limit population growth, it has had a negative impact on gender parity and economic growth of China over the years, which will be discussed further in later sections. The policy was lifted by the Chinese government in 2021 as a result. The sex ratio (female/male) in 2021 is 0.95 (Textor, 2022). The human capital index of the country is 67.72 (ranked 34th among all 155 countries) with a deployment subindex of 74.06 (ranked 19th) (WEF, 2017). The human capital index indicates the degree to which China is a success in developing and deploying the full range of its human capital potential (WEF, 2017).

Economic reform in 1978 started the new socialist-market economy that separated reproduction from production and provided more opportunities to use their capabilities and be rewarded for their efforts. Women

finally stepped out of their house where they had been confined only to have and raise their children and take care of elderly family members for thousands of years.

Although women's participation in the workforce is currently high (70%), the pay gap between women and men is high, also. China's women earn on average 36% less than men for doing similar work, ranking them in the bottom third of the Global Gender Gap Index (ranked 106 out of 153 countries). The estimated earned income of China's women was USD12,200, but it is USD\$19,900 for China's men (WEF, 2020). Women in China's average annual income is two-thirds (67.3%) of men's income in urban areas, and just over half (56%) of men's income in rural areas. In 1978 just 17.9% of China's population lived in an urban area compared to 59.6% in 2018 (Catalyst, 2020).

In the WEF (2018), women have equal access to financial services, as 76.4% of women vs. 81.4% of men have an account at a financial institution. But, in Chinese families, the possibility of daughters' gaining inheritance rights is 50% lower than that of sons'. It is the same rate for women's access to land and non-land use, control, and ownership.

Social

China was a feudal society for over 2000 years. Females were viewed as much inferior in the family and discriminated against. Forty-nine percent of women still endure violence (OECD, 2014). The typical characteristic of gender division of labor used to be that men were primarily outside the home and women were primarily inside the home. Sons are preferred in the family, especially in rural areas, not only because of their physical and economic ability to contribute to the family, but also because only sons can carry the last name of the family as well. It is also believed that only sons can properly venerate their ancestors (Abraham, 2015).

However, since the founding of the New China in 1949, gender stereotyping has dramatically been alleviated thanks to many political/economic movements and woman liberation policies initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which will be elaborated on in the political context section. Women are able to contribute more to the family: in the city, they go to work just as men do; in the rural area, women are able to help with sideline businesses or migrate to cities for better job opportunities. Therefore, women are much more independent and confident than ever, which results in a more equal status with their husbands in the family. The idea of women leaders is widely accepted

and supported in the family. However, the traditional view of a woman's role as a wife and mother is deeply rooted in Chinese society so that a woman who chooses to work more than spending time with her children and family needs to be able to undergo a lot of pressure from her family and/or the society. This prevents many women from realizing their potential and becoming top leaders, which demands time and effort that they cannot afford.

In China, all citizens are required to complete nine years of compulsory education funded by the government and run by the Ministry of Education. This compulsory education consists of six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education (junior or middle school). The family or individuals decide whether they will continue on to senior secondary education or above depending on their financial ability and will.

The mean years of education of females are 6.9 vs. 8.2 for males (UNDP, 2020). The literacy rate of women in China is 94%, while that of men is 98%. The female enrollment rate in secondary education is 47% with males at 53%; the percentage of women with at least a secondary education is 19%, compared to 25% of men. For tertiary education, the enrollment rate of females is 43% vs. 37% for males (WEF, 2021). More women are college educated today than ever before. The representation of women in higher education has steadily increased in the past decade: Over half (50.7%) of enrolled students in tertiary (post-secondary) education were women. The tertiary education attainment rates of women and men aged 25 or above are low, 3% for women and 4% for men (UNDP, 2020).

As a result of the one-child policy for almost four decades, women are 48.6% of China's population because China is a strong boy-preferred country, especially in rural areas. Families that prefer boys but can only have one child will do everything to get a boy as their only child. The current sex ratio at birth is 0.87/1 (girls/boys). China is becoming an aging society. China's fertility rate (1.6 births per woman) has fallen below the replacement level. Almost half (48%) of China's population is between 25 and 54 years old. In 2021, 10% of China's population was over 65 years old. The elderly (65+) population is expected to rise to 17.2% by 2030 and 27.6% by 2050, a projected increase of almost 20% over 35 years. In WEF (2020), healthy life expectancy rate is another important indicator, which shows number of years that a person can expect to live in full health, calculated by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury" (p. 73). The average age "the average for women is 69 vs. 67 for men. On the other hand, equal

opportunity is deeply embedded in Chinese society, which has helped boost gender equality (Mao Zedong, a Chairman of China) famously said that “women hold up half the sky”. This rapid urbanization and low child-care burdens from China’s one-child policy have enabled more women to work.

Cultural

The beliefs and practices in gender issues in China have been influenced by three dominant ideologies and two dominant religions: Confucianism, Socialism/Maoism, Capitalism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

Confucianism

Confucius (551 BC–479 BC) was a teacher, politician, and philosopher in ancient China, and he accepted traditional gender hierarchies and the patriarchal kinship system from before his time (Gao, 2021). “Although the society has since undergone many changes, the fundamental values of Confucianism still influence the behaviors of individuals and the order of the society” (Ke et al., 2006, p. 30).

In *Analects*, individual records of conversations between Confucian masters and disciples, the Three Cardinal Guides, and the Five Constant Virtues (三纲五常) were proposed. The Three Cardinal Guides are Ruler Guides Subject (君为臣纲), Father Guides Son (父为子纲), and Husband Guides Wife (夫为妻纲). The Five Constant Virtues are benevolence (仁), righteousness (义), propriety (礼), knowledge (智), and sincerity (信). The Three Cardinal Guides dictate women to be subject to their fathers, then husbands, and then to sons during widowhood. Being submissive as a wife and mother is women’s way (妇道). Confucianism reached its peak during *Song Dynasty* (960–1279), when the Cult of Chastity was advocated. Chastity was considered the highest virtue for women, who would rather die than get remarried after the passing of their husbands. Those chaste widows were elevated to the role of cultural heroes (Adler, 2005).

Clark and Wang (2004) argued that Confucians had no intention to promote gender inequality in their teaching, and later Confucians actually focused more on the Five Constant Virtues, which were used to teach rulers how to become noble enlightened leaders (*Jun Zi*). *Jun Zi* can be a woman or a man. Whoever can manage to cultivate the five constant virtues can be a leader. However, Confucianism, especially the Three Cardinal Guides, did support the patriarchal character of society

and was used by many emperors and bureaucrats as a ruling tool to suppress Chinese women in imperial China.

Buddhism and Daoism

While Confucianism created gender stereotyping and inequality in the society, Buddhism and Daoism provided some alternatives for women in the Chinese culture. Buddhism originated in India and, over time, changed to become more feminist-friendly. For instance, *Guanyin*, a female Buddha is known as *Goddess of Compassion*, was not a woman figure originally (Adler, 2005). Unlike many other religions in the world, Buddhism has no one central God. Instead, anyone who follows Buddhist doctrines, meditating and cultivating him/herself, can become a Buddha such as *Guanyin* and live a fulfilling, happy life. Buddhism believes in Karma and everything happens for a reason. Buddhism does not exclude women or provide justice for discrimination against women. Instead, “Buddhist nunneries provided alternative vocations not only for those women who chose not to marry, but also for widows and those women who, once their children had grown, felt limited by Confucian social restrictions” (Adler, 2005, para. 11).

Before Confucius, *I Ching*, a book of changes and the great book of divination, coined the theory of *Yin* and *Yang*. *Yin*, originally meaning “shady, secret, dark, mysterious, cold,” represents everything of this nature, such as feminine; and *Yang*, originally meaning “clear, bright, the sun, heat,” represents everything of this nature, such as masculine. Despite the clear division between *Yin* (feminine) and *Yang* (masculine), everything in the world is actually a mixture of *Yin* and *Yang*, which might turn out to be the opposite to each other under certain circumstances. *Yin-yang* theory recognizes the differences between *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) but also confirms that they are equally good. *Yin* and *yang* are reciprocal and contribute to an integrated whole (Adler, 2005). This belief has a substantial influence in Chinese leadership theories, which will be detailed later.

It is generally believed that Confucianism focuses more on the masculine aspect of *Yin-Yang*, while Daoism focuses more on the feminine aspect of *Yin-Yang*. Confucianism highlights the dominance of the masculinity in its doctrine, and Daoism embraces harmony and believes in the importance of developing women and cultivating femininity in a culture. Therefore, in Daoism, women can be priests, libationers (religious professionals), teachers, or even immortals (Kohn, 2004). “In

medieval Daoist monasteries, women were equal in status to men in all ways, distinguished only by the type of cap they wore” (Kohn, 2004, p. 65). Both Buddhism and Daoism call for respect from men to women in their practices.

Socialism/Maoism

From the early twentieth century, the May 4th generation of intellectuals started to reject Confucianism as an obstacle to Chinese advancement. The rejection was formalized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) after the founding of the New China. CCP viewed Confucianism as a feudal ideology that was inimical to socialism and, therefore, tried to establish a new socialist ideology that defined women in a different way through a series of economic and political movements (as elaborated in the Political Context).

The famous quote from Chairman Mao, the first and founding leader of the New China, opened a new chapter for contemporary women in China. It says: “Women hold up half of the sky” (Cooke, 2013, p. 285). This quote instilled the idea of gender equality into Chinese society and has a long-lasting effect on Chinese women and China’s economic development.

To support this new ideology, the government supported many educational, consciousness-raising programs, during which the old codes of ethics, such as women should not participate in public matters, were criticized. Furthermore, women were encouraged to voice their opinions in small groups and forego the idea of depending on men (Luo, 1997). Chinese women today believe that they are entitled to rights and status equal to men.

Capitalism

With the economic reform, the country opened its doors not only to a new economic form, but also a new ideology: capitalism. As Marcus (2016) put it, capitalism sponsors feminism, if not more, because it does not create gender division of labor. Business does not care who produces the products, a woman or a man; they care only for the quality of products for which consumers are willing to pay. In this case, women are provided freedom of choice between housework and work outside the house, as well as an equal opportunity to perform if they do choose to work as men.

Compared to socialist feminism, capitalist feminism, often called individualism/libertarian feminism, provides legitimate options to women when approaching equality, freedom, and justice.

Under the influence of both socialist feminism and libertarian feminism, Chinese women who were oppressed for over 2000 years were liberated faster than those in many other societies in the world.

However, further analysis of ideologies and religions disclosed that Chinese society has seemingly accepted the idea of gender equality, but it actually does not when social injustice to women is still allowed. The reasons are: (1) Although the yin-yang theory and Daoism posit that *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) are equally important, males still dominate positions of power. In other words, gender division of labor still exists. “The fact that yin and yang are equal and interrelated aspects of the cosmos does not imply that males and females must be treated equally” (Clark & Wang, 2004, p. 408); (2), despite the fact that Buddhism encourages everyone to cultivate themselves to become a Buddha. The kinds of wives endorsed by the religion clearly shows similar personal traits expected from men to women as a patriarchal culture. They are friends, caregivers, and sisters/slaves to their husbands; and (3) in the new market economy; Chinese women are offered great freedom in choosing what they can do to contribute to their family: housewives or work outside the house. For most who choose to work as their husbands do, there is a dual burden because raising and educating children are still mainly the responsibility of women. The glass ceiling effect is, therefore, a result of the work-balance issue. Furthermore, despite women’s rights and interests protection laws, the enforcement of the laws is lacking; (4) probably the most important, the self-efficacy of Chinese women for high leadership positions is low. Due to the long-term influence of Confucius ideology, the traditional view that wives should take care of internal family affairs primarily and husbands external business for the family is deeply embedded in Chinese women’s minds.

Political

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been the ruling party in China since the establishment of the new China in 1949, when all women were granted voting rights and the same rights for divorce as men. The China Women’s Federation was established at the same time to represent and protect women’s rights and interests.

The cooperative movement (1952–1956) and the communication movement (1956–1958) entitled women to do fieldwork and totally changed the gender division of labor for the first time: these movements allowed them to enter the wage labor force and to be rewarded on the same work points (*Gong Feng*) system as men.

Furthermore, the state played an important role in promoting women's rights by developing legislation and policies to protect women's rights and interests. For instance, the Marriage Law of 1950 ruled out many discriminating practices against women, such as arranged marriages, concubinage, dowries, and child brides. Article 6 of the Marriage Law in 2017 stipulated that the legal marriage age for men and women is 22 and 20, respectively, and late marriage and childbearing should be encouraged, which indirectly grants more time for women to develop in work and life. In the Special Provisions on Labor Protection for Women Workers promulgated by the State Council's 200th executive meeting in 2012, women can get paid maternity leave of at least 98 days. However, the cost is shared by the government and employer. Therefore, employers tend to hire men instead of women due to the long maternity leave; some employers hire women only who have already had children, deny pregnant women statutory leave, or dismiss women during pregnancy. Those discriminatory practices reported by the United Nation Human Rights Council were unlawful according to Chinese National Labor Law, but only strong enforcement of the law can help to prevent them (Catalyst, 2020).

The 1979 one-child policy is the most controversial policy that was designed to control population growth and relieve women's burden at home. On the one hand, girls became the immediate victims of this policy: With advanced technology, such as ultrasound detection, families with a traditional preference for boys aborted girls before full term, leaving China with a significant gender imbalance. On the other hand, girls are cherished as much as boys because they were singletons in the family. In bigger cities, some families prefer girls over boys because girls are naturally closer to their biological parents and families, and it costs much less when they get married later on (it is a tradition that the groom's family needs to show his family's financial ability to raise his wife and children by providing housing and covering all or most of the wedding expenses). The girls cherished by their families are showered with all of their families' resources and a top-notch education; they are able to go to the

best universities and gain employment in the most competitive companies (Abraham, 2015). In October 2015, China abolished the one-child policy, and starting from 2021, the country has encouraged to have more than two children for a family. The effect of the new birth promotion policies has yet to be seen.

Despite these improvements in women's rights and status, the political voice and representation of women are low. Only 23% of women in China have a political voice (OECD, 2019). Less than one-quarter (24.9%) of all positions in China's parliament are held by women, and only 3.2% of all ministerial positions are held by women. In the past 50 years, there were only four years with a female head of state (WEF, 2021). No woman has ever been among the nine members of China's top level of decision-making, the Political Standing Committee of the Communist Party (Catalyst, 2021a, 2021b).

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT IN NON-ASIAN COUNTRIES

North America: United States and Its Contexts

Economic

The U.S. per capita income was USD\$59,500 in 2020 (CIA, 2022). The pay gap between women and men is high. Women in the USA earn on average 35% less than men for doing similar work, and the estimated earned income of women was USD\$43,122 compared with USD\$66,338 for men (WEF, 2022). Ninety-five percent of women and 92% of men have a checking/savings account with a financial institution. Women's access to financial services is on par with men. In addition, women have achieved parity in regards to inheritance rights, with access to, control of, and ownership of land. The current gender ratio is 0.98. The human capital index of the country is 74.84 (ranked 4th) with a deployment subindex of 68.74 (ranked 43th) (WEF, 2017). Women's participation in the workforce is 67% and men's rate of participation is 78% (WEF, 2020).

Social

The current gender ratio at birth in the US is 0.98/1 (girls/boys). Today's American women are having 2 children per woman, the replacement rate. The mean years of schooling for women is 13 and 12.9 for men (UNDP, 2020). The literacy rate of women is the same as that of

men, 99%. The enrollment rate of girls in secondary education is 92% and for boys, 89%; in tertiary education, the enrollment rate of women is 93% vs. 75% for men, which indicates outperformance of women vs. men in higher education (WEF, 2020). The healthy life expectancy age for women is 70.1 vs. 66.9 for men (WEF, 2020). When looking at these numbers, you would expect that women would have achieved equity, but it is not the case. It becomes evident that lack of education or lesser educational level is not the root cause of gender inequity in the US.

The notion of family in North American changed from a nuclear two-generational group with parents and children sharing the same household in the 1950s and 1960s to a family system in which family and business have been embedded together after the 60s (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). In the former family structure, few women worked outside the home, while it is not rare for women to do so in the current family structure. However, spillovers exist between family and business, which influence the processes of women making decision to take leadership positions outside their homes. In other words, family members' perceptions of women's leadership will decide whether women will be engaged in leadership roles in business. In this type of family, women are still expected to be the primary caregivers of their children even when they work outside the home. Men, on the other hand, are expected to be good economic providers for their families. This dual role of women unfairly requires women not only to be the financial provider, but also the family caregiver. An often repeated phrase the author (grown up in the south) always heard in his rural community while growing up was "men work from sun up to sun down, but women's work is never done". This rural saying captures the plight of women today who venture out of the home but are still expected to fulfill the role of homemaker.

Cultural

The primary religion is Protestant Christian (46.5%), and secondly is Roman Catholic (20.8%) (CIA, 2022). Some Christian denominations put the man as the head of the household, and this cultural mindset permeates U.S. American society. Some Christian religious leaders feel that women should not retain positions of leadership in the church. Some Protestant churches do not let women serve as pastors or heads of the church. It should be noted that this is slowly changing, but this mindset is still in the majority (Masci, 2014). However, in contrast to

this conservative position, there are many progressive Christian denominations who are strongly pro-feminist and encourage women to enter the ministry, e.g., Episcopal Church, some Lutheran synods, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the United Presbyterian Church, and many others, supporting the movement toward feminism in the U.S. culture. The conservative belief systems (Roman Catholic, some Lutheran synods, Mormons, and most evangelical churches) causes some U.S. Americans to feel that women should not aspire to political or business leadership. This cultural ideology reinforces the thinking that “women should know their place” and that “men are supposed to wear the pants in the family”.

Political

The United States government is best categorized as a constitutional federal republic. Political parties are essentially organizations designed for ideological advocacy and achieving control of the government through elections. The U.S. American political sphere has been historically dominated by a two-party system. The first major national political party was the Federalist Party, followed by the Democratic-Republican Party (predecessor to the current Democratic Party), both of which dominated the early U.S. American political scene for nearly thirty years. The demise of the Federalist Party saw the Whig Party taking center stage for about two decades. The emergence of the Republican Party toward the middle of the nineteenth century established a two-century long duopoly with the Democratic Party lasting until today (Wallach, 2017). Only 26% of women in the United States have political voice (OECD, 2019). The United States has never had a woman as head of state, though there has been one woman as a candidate for President, and, in 2020, a woman senator is running as vice-president for the Democrats. Other women have been nominated as vice-president, by both parties. “In 2020, 144 (105D, 39R) women held seats in the United States Congress, comprising 27% of the 539 members; 24 women (24%) served in the United States Senate, and 120 women (27%) served in the United States House of Representatives” (Blazina & Desilver, 2021). These numbers show that women have made inroads into the political sphere, but that much more needs to be done for women in the USA to have political equality with their men peers. “The U.S. Constitution does not guarantee equal rights for women. According to the Equal Rights Coalition, 96% of Americans think the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has passed. Without the ERA, the status quo, which needs

to change, is changing more slowly” (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tabby-biddle/wait-women-dont-have-equa_b_6098120.html). The ERA needs only one more state to affirm the constitutional amendment. It should be noted that a woman has still been unable to achieve the presidency of the United States; however, Senator Hillary Clinton came very close to breaking this ultimate glass ceiling for women in the United States during the 2016 election. It was encouraging that she was able to win the popular vote, yet was defeated by the Electoral College vote.

South America: Brazil and Its Contexts

Economic

Brazil is the sixth-largest economy and had a per capita GDP of USD\$14,100 in 2020 (WEF, 2022). The current gender ratio (female/male) is 0.95. The human capital index of the country is 59.73 (ranked 77th) with a deployment subindex of 62.4 (ranked 76th) (WEF, 2017). Women’s participation in the workforce is 62%, and men’s rate of participation is 83%. The pay gap between women and men is high. Women in Brazil earn on average 42% less than men for doing similar work, and the estimated earned income of women was USD\$11,666 and USD\$20,263 for men. Women in Brazil also lag behind their male counterparts in regards to banking access as 65% of women and have a checking/savings account with a financial institution, but 72% of men possess a checking/savings account. Women’s access to financial services is only 50% of the rate of access for men. In Brazilian families, the possibility of daughters’ gaining inheritance rights is half (50%) that of sons. Women do have equal access to land and non-land use, control, and ownership.

Social

In Brazil, it is mandatory for children to go to school from age 6 to 14. These compulsory nine years of education are known as Fundamental Education (*Ensino Fundamental*) and are divided into two levels: *Ensino Fundamental I* and *Ensino Fundamental II*. During the *Ensino Fundamental I*, children study mathematics, Portuguese, science, arts, history, geography, and physical education. During *Ensino Fundamental II*, students study at least one other compulsory language (Angloinfo, 2017).

The literacy rate of women is 93% and that of men is 92%. Girls’ enrollment rate in secondary education is 85% and boys, 79%; for tertiary

education, the enrollment rate of women is 53% vs. 40% for men. The average healthy life expectancy age for women is 68 vs. 63 for men (Forum, 2016). Women are more successful at persisting in higher education. In 2007, 48.4% of men enrolled in college earned their degree, while 62.9% of women graduated (Greco et al., 2016).

Families are valued and usually big. Women take care of kids for their families and/or work at low-paid jobs, such as teaching and nursing. Brazilian women are leading in the science field and are successful in entrepreneurship, thanks to support from the government.

Cultural

Brazil's primary religions are Roman Catholic (64.6%) and Protestant (22.2%) (CIA, 2022). Brazilian culture is a melting pot of nationalities, as a result of centuries of European (mostly Portuguese) domination and slavery, which brought hordes of African migrants across Brazil's borders to live in and influence the local cultures with their ancient customs and ideas. The European settlers also brought ideas, innovations, and belief systems with them, shaping local societies significantly. All of these influences have meant that the modern-day Brazilian culture is unique and very complex. More than half are white, just fewer than 40% are mixed black and white, and less than 10% are black.

Political

The Brazilian government is a federal representative democratic republic with a presidential system. Brazil has 32 official political parties, and five political parties dominate the political environment of the country. While Brazilian women are doing well in business and education, the same cannot be said in the political sphere. Only 53 of 513 congressional representatives are women. The female political voice in Brazil is only 9%.

Europe: Sweden and Its Contexts

Economic

Sweden had a per capita GDP of USD\$50,700 in 2020 (CIA, 2022). Sweden has a diverse, highly competitive and successful, capitalistic economy. The WEF (2021) ranked Sweden as one of the top ten countries leading gender equality in the world. The gender ratio (female/male) was 0.94. The human capital index of the country was 73.95 (ranked 8th) with a deployment subindex of 69.60 (ranked 39th) (WEF, 2017). The

unemployment rate in 2021 was 6.78%. Nearly ninety-one (90.6) percent of the population are internet users, which is the highest rate among the countries examined (CIA, 2022).

Women's participation in the workforce was high (79%), and the pay gap between women and men is shrinking. Women in Sweden earn on average 22% less than men doing similar work, and the estimated earned income of women was USD\$39,804 with USD\$50,796 for men (WEF World Economic Forum [WEF], 2021). In the WEF Gender Gap Report (2021), women have equal access to financial services as men. One hundred percent of men and women have an account at a financial institution. Women have also achieved parity in regards to inheritance rights, access to land and non-land use, control, and ownership.

Social

The sex ratio at birth is 1.00 male/female. Nearly eighty-six (85.8) percent of the population lived in urban areas. Life expectancy for men was 80.4, with 83.9 for women (CIA, 2022). The mean years of schooling for women were 12.2 with 12 for men (UNDP, 2020). The birth rate was 1.88 children born/woman.

From the age of six, every child has equal access to free education in Sweden. The Swedish school system is regulated through the Education Act, which ensures a safe and friendly environment for students. The act mandates nine years of school attendance for all children from the year they turn seven. Sweden, *förskola* (pre-school) is provided by municipalities for children ages one to five. The amount of municipal subsidy for pre-school depends on the child's age and whether the parents work, study, are unemployed, or on parental leave for other children. Swedish pre-school emphasizes the importance of play in a child's development, with a curriculum aiming to ensure children's individual needs and interests. Gender-aware education is increasingly common, striving to provide children with the same opportunities in life regardless of gender.

The current sex ratio at birth is 1.00 (girls/boys). Today's Swedish women are having 2 children per woman. The mean years of schooling for females is 12.2 and 12 for males (UNDP, 2020). There are more women than men who participate in higher education. The average life expectancy age for women is 73 vs. 70 for men.

Cultural

The racial makeup of the country is primarily of indigenous persons: Swedes with Finnish and Sami notherners, formerly known in English as Laplanders) minorities; with immigrants coming from Finland, Syria, Iraq, Poland, and Iran. The official language is Swedish. The primary religion is the Church of Sweden, which is Lutheran, a major branch of Protestant Christianity (CIA, 2022).

Swedish people believe that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. They also believe that men and women should have equal distribution among all levels of society. The Education Act of Sweden states that gender equality should reach all levels of the educational system. A welfare system that promotes a healthy work-life balance is of great utility to women. In addition, generous paid family leave policies have helped women achieve unprecedented levels of equality in the workplace. Parents are allowed to share 480 days of paid family leave when a child is born or adopted (Sweden, 2017).

Sweden's egalitarian society builds on historical circumstances that favor a sense of solidarity. One of the key characteristics of Swedish culture is that Swedes are egalitarian in nature, humble, and boasting absolutely unacceptable. In many ways, Swedes prefer to listen to others as opposed to ensuring that their own voice is heard. When speaking, Swedes speak softly and calmly. It is rare that you witness a Swede demonstrating anger or strong emotion in public.

Swedes rarely take hospitality or kindness for granted, and, as such, they will often give thanks. Failing to say thank you for something is perceived negatively in Sweden. Behaviors in Sweden are strongly balanced toward *lagom* or, everything in moderation. Excess, flashiness, and boasting are abhorred in Sweden, and individuals strive toward the middle way. As an example, working hard and playing hard are not common concepts in Sweden. People work hard but not too hard; they go out and enjoy themselves, but without participating in anything extreme. Due to the strong leaning toward egalitarianism in Sweden, competition is not encouraged, and children are not raised to believe that they are any more special than any other child.

Political

Sweden is a parliamentary democracy with general elections every four years. The Swedish Parliament is referred to as the Riksdag. The Swedish Constitution regulates the relationships between decision-making, executive power, and the basic rights and freedoms of citizens. Four major laws make up the Constitution: the Instrument of Government, the Act of Succession, the Freedom of the Press Act, and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression. The Instrument of Government guarantees citizens the right to obtain information freely, hold demonstrations, form political parties, and practice their religion. Gender equality is strongly emphasized in the Education Act, the law that governs all education in Sweden. Gender equality starts from pre-school. Currently, girls outperform boys in school in general (12% higher grade points than boys), and more girls complete upper secondary education (88.6% vs. 66.4%) (OECD, 2019).

The family in Sweden is extremely important, and, as such, the rights of children are well protected. The rights afforded to Swedish families to ensure that they are able to care adequately for their children are some of the best rights in the world. An overview of these rights includes: Either the mother or father is entitled to be absent from work until their child reaches 18 months. Either parent has the right to reduce their workload by 25% until their child reaches 8 years old (and is formally ready for school). A parental allowance is paid for 480 days, which is intended for both parents. For this reason, this element of the allowance is often known as Daddy's months. One has the right to up to 60 days off per year to care for a sick child. A number of people in Sweden, however, challenge the degree to which these rights are truly positive as statistics suggest that women often fall way behind men colleagues in respect to position and pay.

Sweden has made great strides in achieving gender pay parity, but more work remains before parity will be achieved. Sweden still struggles with a lack of women in top jobs. The Gender Discrimination Act helps regulate gender equality. The law ensures that employers will promote equal rights and prohibits discrimination, and it requires employers to investigate discrimination complaints and take preventative measures to prohibit reoccurrence. Additionally, protections are given to parents who have requested parental leave. The Swedish government is very proactive and has created a climate in which women can be guaranteed the same rights and protections as men. (Sweden, 2017). Political voice of women

is 45%, and Women's representation in parliament is also very high: 44% (WEF, 2021).

Oceania: Australia and Its Contexts

Economic

Sweden had a per capita GDP of USD\$48,700 in 2020 (CIA, 2022). The pay gap between women and men is high. Women in Australia earn on average 37% less than men for doing similar work, and the estimated earned income of women was USD\$35,414 for women and USD\$56,452 for men (WEF, 2021). The human capital index of the country was 71.56 (ranked 20th) with a deployment subindex of 66.2 (ranked 63th) (WEF, 2017).

In the WEF Gender Gap Report (2021), women have equal access to financial services. Ninety-nine percent of women and of men have an account at a financial institution. In Australian families, the possibility of daughters' gaining inheritance rights is equal to that of sons. Women also have equal access to land and non-land use, control, and ownership.

In 2009-2010, average superannuation payouts for women were just over half (57%) those of men. Average retirement payouts in 2009-10 were of the order of USD\$198,000 for men and only USD\$112,600 for women. As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension (AHRC, 2017, para. 6).

Social

The literacy rate of women and men in Australia is 99%. Girls' enrollment rate in secondary education is 88% and for boys, 86%; in tertiary education, the enrollment rate of women is 100% vs. 72% for men (WEF, 2021). The current gender ratio at birth is 0.94/1 (girls/boys). Today's Australian women are having 1.77 children per woman. Nearly thirty-one percent (30.8) of the population is 24 years of age and younger and 27.64% of the population is 55 years of age and older. Forty-two percent are 25-54 years of age (UNDP, 2020). The average health expectancy age for women is 77 vs. 71 for men. Larger numbers of women are gaining access to leadership positions in both public and private sectors. A quarter of women in Australia experience harassment in the workplace, with inappropriate jokes and sexually suggestive comments being the most common type of harassment. Fifty percent of Australian women

report experiencing discrimination in the workplace during their pregnancy. “Mothers spend twice as many hours (8 h and 33 min) each week looking after children under 15, compared to fathers (3 h and 55 min)” (AHRC, 2017, para. 6).

Cultural

The primary religions are Protestant (30.1%) and Catholic (25.3%) (CIA, 2022). Australia began as a penal colony, shaping its national character. Furthermore, Australia was formed by immigration and diverse races. The bushman mythology has also helped to shape Australian culture. Colonials subjugated the aboriginal populations by force, but thankfully, more humane policies were developed.

Political

Australia is a representative democracy with Queen Elizabeth II serving as the head of state. The powers of government are divided between the central government and individual states. Women’s political voice through election to central government bodies in Australia is a fraction above 17%. “Following the 2016 election the total number of women in Parliament has risen slightly from 69 (31%) to 73 (32%). The number of women in the House of Representatives has risen to 43 (29%), up from 40 (27%) at the end of the 44th Parliament. The number of women in the Senate has increased by one since the end of the 44th Parliament to 30 senators (39%). As is the case in many parliaments around the world, women remain significantly under-represented in the Australian parliament. “The Australian figures are similar to those of comparable countries, such as Canada, where women make up 29% of the parliament, and New Zealand, where women make up 31% of the parliament” (Hough, 2016, para. 1–3). These numbers clearly indicate that women in Australia are making improvements in their political empowerment, but more work is to be done if they hope to close the gap with their men counterparts.

COUNTRY COMPARISONS OF CONTEXTUAL IMPACT ON WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses where women stand on their way to becoming leaders in different contexts, and how far they are from their men counterparts. According to UNDP (2020), Australia, Sweden, and the U.S.

are countries of high human development; Brazil and China of moderately high human development. However, the development level does not necessarily indicate or dictate the gap between women and men. Table 11.1 also shows that China has a much larger gender gap to fill than the other countries studied. China scored 0.682 and ranked 107 out of 144 countries. China's rank varies in each of the four sub-indices: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. WEF (2021) used these four sub-indices as indicators for underlying contextual factors: economic, cultural, social, and political, while the overall index evaluates each country's environment for women to participate and perform in leadership. Each subindex and its contextual implications for China and other non-Asian countries are discussed.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY SUBINDEX—ECONOMIC

This subindex measures the gap between women and men in terms of participation, earned income, and the advancement into senior management, technical, and professional positions. Based on this measurement, the country that shows the least gap between women and men is Sweden, followed by the U.S.A., Australia, China, and Brazil. China is ranked low in this category, but slightly better than Australia, Brazil. The ranking is better than five years ago, when Australia ranked higher than China (WEF, 2021). China needs to continue working on providing more opportunities for women to participate in leadership and help them move into senior leadership positions. In addition, the issue of pay disparity still needs to be addressed.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT SUBINDEX—CULTURAL

This subindex measures the gap between women and men in terms of access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as literacy rate. The country that boasts the least gender gap is Australia, followed by USA, Brazil, Sweden, and China. The finding is surprising for sure because USA is no longer leading in the educating women, which might explain why women's leadership development has not made much progress during recent years. In the U.S.A., women earn 60% of undergraduate degrees and 60% of all master's degrees, out of which 38% are in

Table 11.1 2021 Global Gender Gap

Country	Overall Index		Economic Participation and Opportunity Subindex		Educational Attainment Subindex		Health and Survival Subindex		Political Empowerment Subindex		Country		Overall Index		Economic Participation and Opportunity Subindex		Educational Attainment Subindex		Health and Survival Subindex		
	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	Data	Rank	
Sweden	0.823	5	0.810	11	0.996	61	0.962	133	0.522	9											
United States	0.763	30	0.754	30	1.000	36	0.97	87	0.329	37											
Australia	0.731	50	0.700	70	1.000	1	0.968	99	0.258	54											
Brazil	0.687	79	0.640	91	0.998	42	0.980	1	0.132	86											
China	0.682	107	0.701	69	0.973	103	0.935	156	0.118	118											

Source: WEF (2021)

business and management. 47% of all law degrees and 48% of all medical degrees are acquired by women (CAP, 2021).

Again, this indicator shows that China lags behind in providing education to girls/women. China has a long history of valuing education; however, education for a long time has been reserved as a privilege of boys/men and remains more or less as is in some backwards regions currently. This phenomenon has its cultural roots; although sons are more preferred than girls in many patriarchy societies, it is especially so in China. The notion of men's superiority over women was established by Confucianism over 2000 years ago. A girl is viewed as a property of her future married family, as the birth of a daughter, as a Chinese saying goes, is: A married out daughter is like spilt water. And, the notion that ignorance is women's virtue reflects the class oppression against women in Chinese society. Therefore, for many families, especially those with limited financial resources in China, it is not deemed necessary to have girls educated.

HEALTH AND SURVIVAL SUBINDEX–SOCIAL

This subindex sets the social environment for women's development and measures the gap between women and men in terms of gender ratio at birth, life expectancy, and survival rate. Based on the WEF (2021) data, the countries that have health and survival gaps ranging from the least to the most are: Brazil, U.S.A., Australia, Sweden, and China. Again, China is the lowest-ranked country among all the examined economies, which indicates that healthcare is greatly needed for Chinese women in order to achieve more success in women's leadership development. However, Brazil ranked the first among all the countries reported, which is quite an achievement compared to its performance in the areas. More research to find out the reasons behind the phenomenon will provide more insights for the rest of the world in terms of improving women's health and survival rate.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT SUBINDEX–POLITICAL

This sub-index measures the gap between men and women at the highest level of political decision-making through the ratio of women to men in minister-level, parliamentary, and executive offices. The subindex indicates

that women in Sweden have been more empowered politically compared to women in the other countries examined, which is thanks to the legislative quota system that has been in place since the 1970s. The countries ranked below Sweden are U.S., Australia, Brazil, and China. China is on the bottom of the ranking, 118 of 144 countries, once again.

After the contextual factors of each country are reviewed, women's participation and performance are presented in the following Tables (11.2 and 11.3). Gender equality is the most critical element that women's leadership development should focus on because it remains as a major barrier to human and women's development. Therefore, the Gender Inequality Index provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was analyzed. The Gender Inequality Index was introduced by UNDP in 2010 to measure the gender disparity of 188 countries in the world. Three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status are included in the index. Table 11.2 compares the results between the 2020 Gender Inequality Index from the United Nations and the 2021 Gender Gap Index from World Economic Forum.

As shown in Table 11.2, Sweden remains the highest ranked country in both indices, showing the least gender gap, while the U.S. remains the middle ranked, and China and Brazil remain as lower ranked countries. And, it is interesting to see the change of ranking when different gender contextual factors are considered: when secondary education instead of overall education situation was considered without including women's health and survival rate (more social contextual factors such as family

Table 11.2 Gender Gap Index 2021 versus Gender Inequality Index 2020

	<i>Gender Gap Index, 2021 (World Economic Forum)</i>			<i>Gender Inequality Index, 2020 (UNDP)</i>		
	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank among 144 countries</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank among 188 countries</i>
Sweden	1	0.823	5	1	0.039	3
United States	2	0.763	30	4	0.204	46
Australia	3	0.731	50	2	0.069	14
Brazil	4	0.687	79	5	0.408	95
China	5	0.682	107	3	0.168	39

Source WEF (2021), UNDP (2020)

discrimination and violence against women), China moved from the bottom to the middle in rank, and Australia moved from the fourth place to the second place. This again confirms the importance of examining and analyzing different contextual factors in studying women's leadership issues. It is also noticeable that China surpassed USA in reaching gender equality in 2019, indicated by the gender inequality index in UNDP (2020) while China was far behind USA in terms of gender gap in 2020 (WEF, 2021). Future study on what has contributed to the conflicting result is greatly needed.

Due to the fact that data for all countries were not complete in one source, data from different sources of 2015–2020 were extracted to compare in Table 11.3. Data within a three-year range normally do not vary much and can be considered comparable.

Table 11.3 lists countries in the order of high to low in terms of women's labor participation rate. Although China has the highest women's labor participation rate, its women's participation rates in key management positions and senior management roles are the lowest among all the countries selected. In other words, fewer women who work become leaders compared to women who work in non-Asian countries due to the gender stereotyping from traditional ideologies and beliefs. In

Table 11.3 Percentage of womenleaders

	<i>Women's labor participation</i>	<i>Key management positions</i>	<i>Senior management roles</i>
China	63.9% ¹	17.5% ⁴	10.7% of board directors in 2014 and 3.2% of CEOs ³
Sweden	60.3% ¹	24% in 2014 ⁴	33.6% board of director ⁵ and
Brazil	59.4% ¹	19.4% ⁴	6.3% of board directors ⁴
Australia	58.8% ¹	27.4% ²	23.6% of board directors and 15.4% of CEOs ²
United States	56.3% ¹	37% ³	19% of board directors ³ and 4% of CEOs of S&P 500 Companies ²

Sources 1. UNDP (2020); 2. Catalyst (2020); 3. CAP (2015); 4. WBDB (2015); 5. Hora (2015)

the United States, women's labor participation rate is the lowest among the developed countries, but women who entered lower- and middle-level leadership positions were more than those in Australia and Sweden, which leads to the alarming phenomenon: very few business women got to the top of organizations. Only 4% of CEOs of United States' S&P 500 companies were women in 2021, compared to 15.4% in Australia. Brazil has the third highest level of women's labor participation rate but has the next to the last place in regards to percentage of women in senior management roles. Sweden's higher women's participation rate in politics did not reflect in the business arena. Women make up 45% of parliament but only 13% of corporate leadership. In other words, the quota system did not help women in business as much as it did in politics. In Australia, the number of women in the lower- and middle-level management positions and in the top positions of organizations are quite balanced, which can be explained by the fact that Australia is a more equalitarian society, and women suffer less from gender stereotyping and glass ceiling effect than the other countries studied.

CONCLUSION

Kabeer and Natali (2013) argued that the relationship between gender equality and economic growth is an asymmetrical one: the contributing effect of gender equality on a society's economic growth is more consistent and robust than the reverse effect. The review and analysis of literature and data on world women's leadership development in this chapter echoes that. Despite being the second largest economy, China has a much bigger gender gap to fill than many other countries of less economic power such as Australia, Sweden and Brazil. Among the highly developed countries—U.S.A., Sweden, and Australia, the U.S.A. lags behind in the number of top women business leaders. Saab (2014) presented a surprising fact: "The highest proportions of women with senior roles are in the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. There, women comprise 30% of senior management positions, which is higher than the global average (24%)" (para. 10). More contextual factors than economic factors need to be examined in order to understand how different women leadership's development in China is from those of some non-Asian countries, which will provide insights on

how to develop future women leaders on the national level. More contextual factors other than economic factors are also analyzed in this chapter: social, cultural, and political.

CONTEXTUAL CATALYSTS AND IMPEDIMENTS FOR WOMEN'S SUCCESS IN CHINA AND NON-ASIAN COUNTRIES

Some contextual catalysts and impediments are persistent and consistent across cultures despite their divergent contexts. Some prominent contextual catalysts are educational opportunity, socio-economic support, and political advocacy for gender equality/diversity. And some prominent contextual impediments to women's success are traditional perceptions of gender roles, work-life imbalance, and the glass ceiling effect.

CONTEXTUAL CATALYSTS

Some contextual catalysts and impediments are persistent and consistent across cultures despite their divergent contexts. Some prominent contextual catalysts are educational opportunity, socio-economic support, and political advocacy for gender equality/diversity. The following catalysts are of great utility in fostering the success of future women leaders.

- (1) *Educational opportunity*: More access to education, especially higher education, for women makes it possible for them to participate more in the workforce and be better prepared for leadership positions. Education is valued highly in Chinese society, and girls have more opportunities to be educated as a result of economic reform and the one-child policy. Women's labor participation rate in China was as high as 64% in 2015. The same is true for women from highly developed countries, such as Sweden, the U.S.A., and Australia.
- (2) *Socio-economic support*: The traditional role of women is as wife and mother for all cultures. In order for women to become leaders, social support, such as child care from family (grandparents in China), and government (paid maternity leave in Sweden and Australia) are needed to alleviate dual burdens from life and work. In addition, for women who would like to start their own business to circumvent the glass ceiling effect, easily accessed internet,

technology, small business loans, and/or other financial resources will help them achieve their leadership goals. For instance, Brazil's high percentage of women ownership in small firms (50.2% in participation and 19.4% in top management) is attributed to its microfinance system available to women entrepreneurs.

- (3) *Political advocacy for gender equality/diversity*: Governmental strong support for gender equality not only helped change traditional discrimination against women in China, but also challenged the idea that women should take responsibility for raising children in Sweden. Maternity leave policies in Sweden are no doubt a booster for more persistent women's participation in leadership. Sweden is also an exemplar of women's participation in politics thanks to its quota system. The Australian Council of Superannuation Investors (ACSI), an environmental, social, and corporate governance body, promoted gender diversity in boards of directors for businesses by setting up diversity targets. Political support and government's participation are the most important step in institutionalizing gender equality and developing women leaders.

CONTEXTUAL IMPEDIMENTS

Some prominent contextual impediments to women's success are the traditional perceptions of gender roles, work-life imbalance, and the glass ceiling effect. These contextual impediments must be overcome in order to prevent marginalization of women. These contextual impediments were found in all countries that were examined.

(1) *Traditional perceptions of gender roles*

Stereotyping and prejudice/unfavorable perceptions are the persistent roadblocks to women's success across cultures. "Stereotyping happens when individuals cognitively categorize people into groups and then acquire beliefs that certain attributes are common among members of those groups, including their own" (Bullough, 2008, p. 21). Stereotyping normally stems from ideologies, religions, and beliefs that the society holds, and the traditional belief that a woman should take care of only internal family businesses has a history of thousands of years in China so it is embedded in Chinese women's mind. As the idiom goes, one is one's

worst enemy. This is the case for Chinese women's development: The stereotyping lowers women's self-efficacy and aspiration for leadership positions; this holds them back from those positions, especially top ones. Similar gender stereotyping has the same detrimental effects on women's leadership development. Women firmly believe that being leaders is not a woman's business; therefore, they are willing to follow the patriarchal system and woe against women who would like to climb to the top of the ladder. This explains the small percentage of women CEOs, even though women's labor participation rate for both China and the U.S.A. is high.

(2) *Work-family imbalance*

This is one of the hot topics in gender literature. In western societies, women who climbed into higher positions in organizations had to master the task of wearing multiple hats at the same time (Bullough & De Luque, 2015). In the U.S.A. family, men are perceived as breadwinners, and women, on the other hand, have to sacrifice their work responsibilities for family duties, which cause reduced hours for work, increased stress, and more work-family conflicts that become roadblocks on their way to business leadership. Although the U.S.'s education attainment index ranks No. 1 in 2021, its overall gender gap index is ranked No. 45 (score: 0.722), lagging far behind Sweden, which has the same education attainment index. The women's political empowerment is even lower, scored at 0.162, ranked number 73. Eagly and Carli (2004) offered a good explanation in terms of social context of the country: U.S. women's greater involvement in housework caused their attention to be diverted from their paid work and experience more interruptions than their men co-workers, which created an image that women's working styles are inconsistent with the role expectations of leaders; therefore causing more instances of prejudice and discrimination against women in the workplace. In her recent United Nation speech, Anne Hathaway pointed out that the U.S.A. is the only high-income country that does not have paid maternity leave. With 12-week unpaid leaves, many women cannot afford to take it. "One in four American [U.S.A.] mothers has to return to work two weeks after they give birth because they are economically unable to stay at home" (Hathaway, 2017, para. 7).

(3) *Glass ceiling effect*

This is still a major impediment to women's participation and success in leadership (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). The glass ceiling for women is defined by Powell et al. (2002) as "a barrier to entry into top-level management positions... simply because they are women rather than because they lack the ability to handle jobs at higher levels" (p. 68). Of all the countries studied, only women in Sweden and Australia have nearly a decent share in boards of directors: 33% and 15.4%, respectively (Catalyst, 2017; Hora, 2015).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

This chapter presents the leadership development contexts worldwide and compares the leadership development context in China with those of other countries. The comparison acknowledges the impact of contexts (social, economic, political, and cultural) on women's participation in leadership, on one hand, and on the other recognizes the dynamic nature of any given context, which is the changing of the external economic, technological, societal, and development contexts of their surroundings (Lowe & Gardner, 2000). Accordingly, some implications are presented for developing women and women leaders in different contexts in practice and research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The following implications for practice were identified and emerged from this research.

1. Provide emotional and financial support for women to start their own businesses.
2. Extend further education and training to women to make them more active in leadership participation.
3. Provide small loans or customized loan system to women, such as micro-credit, to assist them in launching small businesses (Berns et al., 2020).
4. Institutionalize the idea of women's leadership in society. In order to realize gender equality, institutionalize the idea of women's leadership in society through the growth of schools and education for girls and promotion of women to government, professional, and technical positions.

5. Extend the quota system. Constant debates surround the quota system about the higher level leadership positions for women. Some argued that more women at the top will inspire women to strive to the top, while others have argued that the quota system is flawed because there is no quality talent to promote. It is, therefore, proposed to strengthen the talent pool of mid-career women along with a quota system.
6. Provide management incentives. As proposed by Sofia Falk, the founder of the Swedish company, Wiminvest, management incentives to women, such as private child care, grocery shopping, shared management responsibility, or technical solutions to work from home, work better than more compensation or a company car.
7. Shatter the glass ceiling. Use women mentor programs to set up role models. Family support policies and equal pay structure or system should be implemented. In societal cultures “where women are generally accepted at higher levels of leadership, glass ceiling effects may be considerably minimized” (Bullough, 2008, p. 19). However, the glass ceiling effect on women’s participation in leadership in a country can be moderated by the characteristics of the political, economic, social, technological, infrastructural, business, and cultural contexts (Bullough, 2008). Favorable political environments, such as reinforcement rules, requirements, and norms provide support and legitimacy, such as in Sweden. Additionally, the society can encourage women to start their own businesses. Using this strategy, women can not only avoid the issue of glass ceiling, but they also have flexible hours for themselves and balance their work and life better (Olawejaju & Fernando, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Most recent research studies on world women’s leadership are based on U.S. Americans or western theories and focus more on gender differences in leadership styles and behaviors on the individual and organizational levels. The pitfalls of the trend are disclosed through this chapter: (1) important contextual factors, especially at the national level, are overlooked, causing the limited use of leadership theories of one culture in another culture; and (2) theories on gender differences in leadership styles and behaviors have fewer practical implications than theories on participation and development strategies to be an effective leader in different

contexts for men and women (Bullough, 2008). Therefore, more empirically based women's leadership theories in cultural and contextual scope need to be further developed, with the focus on how to help women become effective leaders in different contexts. The authors of this chapter concur with Earley (2006) in that research in women's leadership should move from viewing gender as a value-based impediment to developing new applicable theories and frameworks built upon discussions of the relationship of culture, context, and practice.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, C. (2015). *Women's roles in China*. <http://resources.primarysource.org/content.php?pid=78888&sid=584078>
- Adler, J. A. (2005). *Women in daoism, buddhism, and confucianism*. <https://healingtausa.com/articles/women-in-daoism-buddhism-confucianism/>
- Aldrich, H. E., & Cliff, J. E. (2003). The pervasive effects of family on entrepreneurship: Toward a family embeddedness perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(5), 573–596. <https://doi.org/10.12691/jbc-2-4-1>
- Anglo-info. (2017). *Information on the education system in Brazil, from pre-primary to higher education, as well as the opportunities available for special needs education*. <https://angloinfo.com/how-to/brazil/family/schooling-education/school-systemand-employability-of-women-in-brazil-reality-and-perspectives.pdf>
- Anonymous (2021). *Gender ratio in the world*. <https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/world-sex-ratio.php>
- Appelbaum, S. H., Audet, L., & Miller, J. C. (2003). Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(1), 43–51. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730310457320>
- Australia Human Rights Commission (AHRC). (2017). *Face the facts: Gender equality*. <https://humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-gender-equality>
- Berns, J. P., Figueroa-Armijos, M., da Motta Veiga, S. P., & Dunne, T. C. (2020). Dynamics of lending-based prosocial crowdfunding: Using a social responsibility lens. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 161(1), 169–185.
- Blazina, C & DeSilver, D. (2021). *A record number of women are serving in the 117th Congress*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/15/a-record-number-of-women-are-serving-in-the-117th-congress/>
- Bullough, A. M. (2008). *Global factors affecting women's participation in leadership* (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database (UMI No. 3358429).

- Bullough, A., & De Luque, M. S. (2015). Women's participation in entrepreneurial and political leadership: The importance of culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories. *Leadership, 11*(1), 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715013504427>
- Burke, S., & Collins, K. M. (2001). Gender differences in leadership styles and management skills. *Women in Management Review, 16*(5/6), 244. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420110395728>
- CAP. (2021). *The women's leadership gap*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2021/08/04/118743/the-womens-leadership-gap/>
- Catalyst (2017). *Women on corporate boards globally*. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-corporate-boards-globally>
- Catalyst. (2020). *Women in the workforce: China*. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-the-workforce-china/>
- Catalyst. (2021a). *Statistical overview of women in the workforce*. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/statistical-overview-women-workforce>
- Catalyst. (2021b). *Women on corporate boards globally*. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-corporate-boards-globally>
- Chisholm-Burns, M. A., Spivey, C. A., Hagemann, T., & Josephson, M. A. (2017). Women in leadership and the bewildering glass ceiling. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy, 74*(5), 312–324. <https://doi.org/10.2146/ajhp160930>
- CIA. (2022). *The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries>
- Clark, K. J., & Wang, R. R. (2004). A Confucian defense of gender equity. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 72*(2), 395–422. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfh035>
- Cooke, F. L. (2013). Women in management in China. In M. A. Paludi (Ed.), *Women and management: Global issues and promising solutions* (pp. 285–308). Praeger.
- Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of women quarterly, 31*(1), 1–12.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2004). Women and men as leaders. In J. Antonakis & A. Doubleday (Eds.), *Culture, leadership and organizations: The globe study of 62 societies*. Sage Publications
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review, 109*(3), 573–598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573>
- Eagly, A. H., & Mitchell, A. (2004). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: Implications for the sociopolitical attitudes of women and men. In M. A. Paludi, Cianciolo & R. Sternberg (Eds.), *The nature of leadership*. (pp. 279–301). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726701544004>

- Earley, P. C. (2006). Commentary: Leading cultural research in the future: A matter of paradigms and taste. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37, 922–931.
- Engen, M. L., Leeden, R., & Willemsen, T. M. (2001). Gender, context and leadership styles: A field study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74(5), 581–598. <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317901167532>
- Gao, X. (2021). *How can Confucian philosophies contribute to gender equality in Chinese Organisations?* (Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology). <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/14019/GaoX.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>
- Greco, S., Friedlander, R., Cortes, A., & Machado, J. (2016). *Education and employability of women in Brazil: Reality and perspectives*. The Brazilian Institute for Quality and Productivity. <https://bqp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/education-employability-of-women-in-brazil-reality-and-perspectives.pdf>
- Groves, K. S. (2005). Gender differences in social and emotional skills and charismatic leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 11(3), 30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190501100303>
- Hathaway, A. (2017). *Why I became a U.N. Ambassador for paid parental leave?* <http://motto.time.com/4695039/anne-hathaway-paid-parental-leave-un-speech/>
- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership*. Doubleday.
- Hora, G. S. (2015). *Where are the female CEOs. A global study: Myths & reality*. <http://www.ircsearchpartners.com/thought-leadership/where-are-women-ceos-myths-and-reality>
- Hough, A. (2016). *The gender composition of the 45th parliament*. Parliament of Australia. https://aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2016/August/The_gender_composition_of_the_45th_parliament
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture, leadership and organizations: The globe study of 62 societies*. Sage Publications.
- Jennings, J. E., & McDougald, M. S. (2007). Note: Work-family interface experiences and coping strategies: Implications for entrepreneurship research and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3), 747–760.
- Kabeer, N., & Natali, L. (2013). *Gender equality and economic growth: Is there a Win-Win?* Institute of Development Studies.
- Ke, J., Chermack, T. J., Lee, Y. H., & Lin, J. (2006). National human resource development in transitioning societies in the developing world: The People's Republic of China. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 8(1), 28–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422305283056>

- Kohn, L. (2004). *The Daoist monastic manual: A translation of the Fengdao kejie*. Oxford University Press.
- Kulich, C., Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2007). Where is the romance for women leaders? The effects of gender on leadership attributions and performance-based pay. *Applied Psychology*, 56(4), 582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00305.x>
- Leung, K., Bhagat, R. S., Buchan, N. R., Erez, M., & Gibson, C. B. (2005). Culture and international business: Recent advances and their implications for future research. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 36, 357–378. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400150>
- Lowe, K. B., & Gardner, W. L. (2000). Ten years of the leadership quarterly: Contributions and challenges for the future. *c Quarterly*, 11(4), 459.
- Luo, H. (1997). *Economic reform and its impact on women in rural China*. http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/econ_student/6
- Marcus, B.K. (2016). Capitalism doesn't care about women, but it does liberate them. *Foundation for Economic Education*. <https://fee.org/articles/capitalism-doesn-t-care-about-women-but-it-does-liberate-them/>
- Markham, S. (2013). *Women as agents of change: Having voice in society and influencing policy*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/21031/927590NWP0Wome00Box385358B00PUBLIC0.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Masci, D. (2014). *The divide over ordaining women*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/09/the-divide-over-ordaining-women/>
- McElroy, W. (2002). *Liberty for women: Freedom and feminism in the 21st Century*. Ivan R. Dee Publisher.
- OECD. (2019). *Social institutions and gender index (SIGI) 2019 global report: Transforming challenges into opportunities*. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/sigi-2019-global-report-bc56d212-en.htm>
- Olarewaju, T., & Fernando, J. (2020). *Gender Inequality and Female Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71058-7_92-1
- Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., Walker, L. S., & Woehr, D. J. (2014). Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators. *Journal of Applied Pathology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022133>
- Powell, G. N., Butterfield, D. A., & Parent, J. D. (2002). Gender and managerial stereotypes: Have the times changed? *Journal of Management*, 28(2), 177–193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630202800203>
- Ryan, M. K., Haslam, S. A., Hersby, M. D., & Bongiorno, R. (2011). Think crisis—think female: The glass cliff and contextual variation in the think manager—think male stereotype. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 470. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022133>

- Saab, M. (2014). *The surprising countries with more women in corporate leadership than the U.S.—Or even Scandinavia*. <http://time.com/2861431/female-executives-gender-quotas/>
- Schein, V. E., Mueller, R., Lituchy, T., & Liu, J. (1996). Think manager—think male: A global phenomenon? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 17, 33–41. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(199601\)17:1%3c33::AID-JOB778%3e3.0.CO;2-F](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(199601)17:1%3c33::AID-JOB778%3e3.0.CO;2-F)
- Sczesny, S. (2003). A closer look beneath the surface: Various facets of the think-leader think-male stereotype. *Sex Roles*, 49, 353–363. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025112204526>
- Shen, W., & Joseph, D. L. (2021). Gender and leadership: A criterion-focused review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, 31(2), 100765. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmmr.2020.100765>
- Snaebjornsson, I. M., & Edvardsson, I. R. (2013). Gender, nationality and leadership style: A literature review. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(1), 89–103. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v8n1p89>
- Sweden. (2017). *Education in Sweden*. <http://sweden.se/society/education-in-sweden/>
- Textor, C. (2022). *Sex ratio in China 1953–2021*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/251102/sex-ratio-in-china/>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). *Gender inequality index 2019*. <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>
- Wallach, P. (2017). *Prospects for partisan realignment: Lessons from the demise of the Whigs*. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/prospects-for-partisan-realignment-lessons-from-the-demise-of-the-whigs/>
- Wang, A. C., Chiang, J. T. J., Tsai, C. Y., Lin, T. T., & Cheng, B. S. (2013). Gender makes the difference: The moderating role of leader gender on the relationship between leadership styles and subordinate performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 122(2), 101–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2013.06.001>
- World Bank Doing Business. (WBDB) (2015). *Enterprise Surveys: What businesses experience*. <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/2012/china>
- World Economic Forum. (WEF) (2017). *The global human capital report 2017*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Human_Capital_Report_2017.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (WEF) (2018). *The global gender gap report 2018*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf
- World Economic Forum. (WEF) (2020). *The global gender gap report 2020*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf
- World Economic Forum (WEF). (2021). *The global gender gap report 2021*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf



Butterflies Emerging: Women's Leadership in China

Gary N. McLean

BUTTERFLIES EMERGING: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CHINA

When we admire a beautiful butterfly, we seldom remember the arduous journey it has gone through to become such a beauty. A butterfly goes through four distinct and difficult phases of development, known as its metamorphosis: egg, larva or caterpillar, pupa or chrysalis, and adult. Throughout this book, we have seen how Chinese women have gone through many phases of leadership, from leadership in the home through leadership in the community and, gradually, leadership in local levels of leadership in business and government. Gradually, and with the struggle of the butterfly breaking free of the chrysalis, they are slowly moving into senior leadership roles in education, in politics, and in business, including business ownership through entrepreneurship.

G. N. McLean (✉)

National Institute for Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand

e-mail: mclea002@umn.edu

As emphasized by this book's authors, the advancement of Chinese women into leadership positions has been much more than just good luck. It has taken hard work, persistence, collaboration, political action, education, global exposure, family culture change, academic research, and so much more to get them where they are today. And these factors will continue to be needed for the beautiful butterfly to finally break free with women achieving equity in all aspects of Chinese life and sharing senior leadership roles equally with men.

But the butterfly has not yet fully emerged from its chrysalis. Before Chinese women can fully experience equity, especially in leadership, many additional steps are needed. In this chapter, I outline many of the steps that are still needed for this to occur and who might be responsible for ensuring that these changes take place. I organized this chapter into major themes included in this book: family structure; education; technology; politics, Communist party, and legislation; non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NPOs/NGOs), regional impact, globalization; corporate world, including entrepreneurship; and I added one theme that is not included in this book, agriculture.

FAMILY STRUCTURES

As we have seen, a major factor inhibiting Chinese women from moving into leadership roles has been the cultural influence on the family, primarily through Confucianism. With women having primary responsibility for childcare, eldercare, children's education, and housework, it has been nearly impossible to have sufficient time and energy for full-time work, usually essential for leadership roles. Such work is especially difficult if those roles require traveling away from the home city.

However, the strengths of cultural influences are shifting. One factor supporting this shift has been the growth in availability and acceptability of daycare and early childhood education, reducing the need for women to be constantly available in the home for childcare. While Shiyu (2021) pointed to an 11% annual growth in revenues in childcare over the past five years, fewer than 5% of families are able to take advantage of such services because of availability and cost. Associated with this is the acceptability of both daycare and long-term care for elders who are unable to be independent (Xinhua, 2021), with an annual growth rate of over 10%, beginning with an accelerated government push beginning in 2020. In spite of these beginnings, however, much more is needed. Not only are

more facilities needed, but there must be governmental support to cover the costs of such services, and trained personnel are needed, with few trained staff currently available (Habib, 2019).

Another factor has to do with shared housework. Husbands are beginning to support their wives in doing housework, but women still spend much more time in housework than do their husbands, especially in rural areas (Yang, 2017). This change will be long term, as it needs to begin when boys are young. Parents must instill a sense of equality between boys and girls in doing their housework chores. As they become older, there is a better chance that both genders will expect to share housework as adults. Further, as girls consider marriage partners, one expectation will increasingly be focused on a husband who is willing to share housework. Conversely, for economic reasons, men will expect wives to share in work outside of the home.

The Confucian value of harmony through hierarchy, as it is applied here, has put Chinese women in secondary roles, to their fathers, their husbands, their sons, their parents, and their parents-in-law. Experiencing this secondary role throughout their lives, women find it difficult to exercise authority in work roles, and to disagree with their bosses, even when they are wrong. This is another cultural influence that will be difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, if equity is really going to be achieved, families and educational settings must focus on teaching children how to disagree in a way that does not disrupt harmony. Learning to disagree respectfully with parents, husbands, teachers, siblings, and employers will be difficult, especially for older generations who will need to be charged with such a change, but disagreement leads to better decisions, more creativity, and greater egalitarianism in the workplace, community, home, and nation.

EDUCATION

I firmly believe that education is a cornerstone of change, and, on the flip side, a way to reinforce tradition and culture. Because of the size of China's population, gaining a seat in high-quality schools has been very competitive. But high quality does not have to be highly selective with the subsequent pressure that this places on students and parents for high scores on tests. Having a sufficient number of schools with virtual curricula with well-trained teachers can offer the strong educational foundation students need. And, if there is commitment to change,

teacher education programs can turn out teachers who can be change-makers, dramatically changing the culture of the country toward greater gender egalitarianism. This step will require improved teacher education programs, the building of more schools (especially in rural areas), and the implementation of a curriculum focused on gender equity. Further, teacher education can help future teachers develop two-way forms of communications in the classroom and thus help students develop critical thinking to an extent that is not possible through one-way communications, which is typical in classrooms in traditional Asian cultures.

Children frequently model what they see in the behaviors of their parents and teachers. As with many countries, women teachers dominate in elementary schools, with more men and fewer women teachers as the students age. This models inequity at an age when the students are most impressionable. Efforts are needed, then, to recruit men to teach during early years of schooling, with women being recruited to teach at later years of schooling. Effort must also be taken, either through encouragement or even through mandated quotas, to place more women in leadership roles at all years of schooling.

To achieve this equity, it is necessary that both genders be attracted to all majors without gender distinction. Career development programs will be necessary to expose both genders to a broad range of career options and, thus, university and vocational education majors. This will become easier as students are exposed throughout their education to a diversity of teachers representing all areas of potential interest to the students. Again, mandated quotas might be effective in recruiting students of both genders to all majors.

At both college and university levels, students should be encouraged to participate in study abroad programs, opening their homes to international students while they travel to other countries to experience their cultures and educational systems. Given the size of the Chinese educational system, it is unlikely that a large percentage of students will be able to participate in such programs. However, expanding cultural outlooks through such programs will enhance cultural understanding of other countries and of the Chinese culture for students from other countries.

School is also a place where leadership skills can be developed and nurtured. Encouraging girls to participate in athletics can give them confidence in their abilities. Participation in school government and extracurricular activities can be very successful in laying the foundation for leadership. Debate clubs, political and ideological organizations, and

special career focused clubs (similar, for example, to the Future Farmers of America; Distributive Education Clubs of America; Business Professionals of America; Future Business Leaders of America; Family, Careers, and Community Leaders of America; and Skills USA) can all be extremely useful in career development. Girl Guides exist in China, associated with the UK, as are the Girl Scouts, associated with the USA. All of these organizations can be effective in creating leadership opportunities for both genders (through scouting programs), but especially for girls when equity exists in these activities throughout their schooling. While the government may wish to rebrand the scouting programs for both genders, having these programs and encouraging participation can be effective leadership development tools.

TECHNOLOGY

It is a truism to suggest that we live in a technological world. Our experiences during these past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have shown how technology can fill the void when in-person meetings and classes cannot be held. As mentioned earlier, virtual classes can also be a way for China to compensate for the shortage of buildings in which to hold in-person classes, especially in rural areas. For this to be effective, however, students must have access to the necessary technology, which is not always the case, especially for students from low-income families. High-quality virtual classes also require teachers who are competent in teaching in a virtual environment. Quality teacher education can assist in ensuring that this is possible.

But, beyond virtual learning, technology is important in almost every aspect of our lives and will become increasingly important, especially as artificial intelligence takes a firmer grip on society. We see the importance of technology in all disciplines, including the arts. One of my sons is a graphic artist. Some of the artwork he has produced that are my favorites were produced through technology. I do not even begin to understand how he does it. A friend is a music professor and composer; he does all of his composing through synthesizer technology. Musical instruments can all use some form of technology. Research and development, with its accompanying innovation and creativity, requires technology. Fashion, cooking, manufacturing, military, natural resource discovery and extraction, transportation of all sorts (including automobiles), law

enforcement, medical sciences, athletics, ad infinitum, can all require technology. Perhaps expertise in technology is not required to use all of these technologies, but it is certainly necessary to create them. China is second only to the USA as a leader in such creation (van der Merwe, 2021). With China's dominance in AI, and its rapidly growing applications, it becomes extremely important that young women approaching the job market have familiarity and comfort with AI.

One of the concerns highlighted earlier in this book preventing women from moving into high-level management is the need for such leaders to travel, sometimes long distances, raising concerns about safety for women who aspire to leadership roles. With the increasing reliance on technology for conducting business at a distance, this concern is being increasingly diminished. Without leaving her home, women leaders can conduct their business virtually. In fact, in some companies, this has become the norm for the long term.

Social media have imprinted themselves, in varying degrees, on all of us. These have had mixed impact on our lives. The struggle among greater information versus misinformation versus disinformation has created both societal and business dilemmas. Hacking has become common, not just for large corporate and governmental organizations, but also at the individual level. Phishing, spams, invasion of privacy, and other technological crimes, or at least discomforts, are everywhere. What can be done about these problems? Professionals in this field need to have a high level of ethics. Technology is a field in which gender distinctions should not exist, though they continue to exist. Thus, with the application of technology in every field, opportunities for women to excel have become unlimited. And, with these expanded opportunities has come unlimited opportunities for women to occupy top-level leadership roles in every field in every organization.

POLITICS, POLICIES, AND LEGISLATION

As with many other countries in Asia, even in those in which mandates have been put in place, China has not been very successful in recognizing women as political leaders. Not one woman has served on the seven-member Politburo's Standing Committee from the beginning of the country in 1949 (James, 2021). Vice Premier Sun Chunlan is the only woman on the Politburo, a 25-member panel that reports to the Standing Committee (James, 2021). Beyond the national level, things do

not get much better. James (2021) quoted 2021 statistics showing how far women still have to go:

- While 10% of provincial, municipal, and county-level leadership positions are supposed to be reserved for women, quotas are rarely met due to a deep-seated preference for men.
- Women occupy a mere 9.33% of county-level posts as head of government or party secretary, falling to 5.29% in cities and 3.23% at the provincial level. (2nd set of bullets)

Given that government mandates (quotas) do not appear to have been effective, what can be done to change this situation? A major cause for this ineffectiveness appears to lie in the early age of mandatory retirement at age 55 for women in office jobs and 50 for blue-collar women workers—ages established 70 years ago (Sun, 2022). Given the length of time it takes for local and regional leaders to move through the layers of leadership, by the time women have reached the point where they could take a national level of leadership, it is time for their retirement (James, 2021). To overcome this problem, either general or specific exceptions to this requirement need to be removed or increased.

Of the 92 million members of the Chinese Communist Party, fewer than 30% are women (James, 2021). As the CCP is a major pool for recruiting leaders, women automatically receive fewer opportunities for leadership development. To change this, the first step would be for the CCP to take an intentional step in recruiting women into membership and then focusing on moving women members into influential positions.

Another point highlighted by James (2021) is that Chinese women are typically placed in leadership in sectors from which there are few opportunities for promotion, such as education, social work, propaganda, and administration. In comparison, men are placed in sectors with high possibility of promotion, such as the military, internet censorship, and policing. Given experiences in other countries, it is not necessarily the case that Chinese women do not want to work in these fields. Thus, the government can act to ensure that women are recruited into all sectors, allowing them to move into occupations where promotions become more likely. As women move into promotions in sectors viewed as critical to the country's welfare and safety, they are then more likely to move into high level positions in government and in the Party.

There is much that remains to be done through legislation. First, companies have shown reluctance to hire young women because of the possibility of pregnancy. They do not want to pay them during maternity leaves, especially as the period of their maternity leaves has continued to extend. If the government were willing to pay employers, at least partially, for maternity leaves, companies would be more likely to hire women. Second, the cost of childcare has become high, especially as families have been encouraged to expand their family size. Subsidizing companies that put nurseries or daycare centers in company buildings would assist companies extensively, while at the same time saving mothers time, allow for on-site nursing, and give mothers greater peace of mind as a parent.

Another form of government subsidy that would help women move into management roles would be providing companies with bonuses for every woman hired and every woman moved into a higher position. If companies saw a direct financial benefit to hiring and promoting women, they would be much more likely to do so.

It seems absurd in today's world to think that women need to retire at a younger age than men. At age 55, the average Chinese woman will live an additional 24 years, two more years than a Chinese man will live at the same age (Macrotrends, 2022). The same is true around the concept of risky work and prohibiting women from such work, even though it pays generally much higher. People should be hired for their skills and abilities. If a woman can perform in a risky occupation, such as a police officer or firefighter, why should they be prohibited from doing so? There may always be fewer women than men in these positions because of their demands physically, but, if a woman can carry a 50-pound bag down three flights of stairs, a standard test for firefighters, then why should she not be trained to become a firefighter? So, removing restrictions on risky work will benefit women in the workforce.

Another factor that inhibits women from moving into management roles is the cultural practice of conducting business over meals and drinks after work. Companies have a role to play in thwarting such a practice, but it could also be reduced if labor laws required companies to pay employees overtime whenever they are performing their job, even if it is informally over dinner and drinks or while playing golf.

While not requiring new legislation, there are many laws that would help women at work that are simply not practiced and not enforced. One of these has to do with the prohibition from asking about one's marital status and plans and whether one has children, is pregnant, or is planning

on becoming pregnant. In spite of its illegality, it is almost universal in practice (Yi, 2019). The dark side of this, however, is that companies may avoid the law by simply not recruiting women.

NGOs/NPOs

In many countries globally, women have developed their leadership skills by undertaking such roles in non-government (or non-profit) organizations (NGOs/NPOs). The same is proving to be true in China. By working at grassroots levels in their communities, women have been able to work closer to home and develop leadership skills in a friendlier, more inviting environment.

To increase these venues throughout the country, opportunities for such organizations to be initiated must expand. While there may be some concern on the part of the government that such organizations will threaten the established order, regulations can be put in place to control this to ensure that NGOs/NPOs do not challenge the power of the government. Further, the government can provide leadership development to the leadership of such emerging organizations, thus strengthening the organizations and also preparing these women leaders for leadership roles in industry, in government, and in the Party.

REGIONAL IMPACT

There are two ways to view how China, and its women leaders, can have a regional impact: within regions of the country and within its geographic regions globally.

As women assume leadership roles (in NGOs/NPOs, industry, and government), they are able to access their social networks to improve their success in whatever organization they are offering leadership. By accessing these networks within their country, they are able to draw on more experience and expertise, while at the same time being able to influence others around their country. To maximize this impact, women must be intentional about connecting with their networks and expanding them.

Likewise, they can impact women leaders in countries around the world as their networks expand outside of China. This may require that women leaders attend professional conferences that are held both within their country and outside. Because leaders are likely to attend conferences that are close to home, their impact is likely to expand within their

in-country region. Chinese women who attend conferences held in the Asian region are more likely to influence and be impacted by women who are also in Asia. And, of course, international or global conferences give Chinese women leaders an opportunity that extends beyond their region. This impact can be enhanced if women leaders present or, even better, deliver a keynote at such conferences. Another way to become noticed within the region is to publish in practice or academic journals or books. These tactics must be intentional as part of a woman's career path planning.

As Chinese women are faced with many of the same challenges as women in other parts of Asia, especially those in South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, collaboration, both in business and personal development, can have a huge payoff. Again, such efforts must be deliberate.

GLOBALIZATION

Extending the circle further, globalization has the potential for helping women in China to move into leadership roles. First, this happens as companies in other parts of the globe enter the Chinese market. For example, as companies headquartered in the USA move into China, they institute human resource practices and begin to influence the company culture to become more egalitarian in relation to gender. Second, while interacting with companies outside of China in which women experience more opportunity for leadership, Chinese women can identify role models of how this has been done. It might even be that such companies mandate certain behaviors in Chinese companies before non-Chinese companies will interact with the Chinese companies in doing business.

Among the many ways in which Covid-19 has influenced the world of business, it may have limited the opportunities for Chinese women to move into leadership roles in China. Business has declined as a result of the lockdowns. There have been disruptions in the supply chain. As a result, opportunities that might have developed for Chinese women to move into leadership roles may not have been realized. On the other hand, as companies have had to resort to doing business virtually, women may have had experiences that might not have been possible if they had continued working on site, thus improving their opportunities for doing things they would not otherwise have done globally, opening opportunities for leadership experiences.

CORPORATE WORLD, INCLUDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

If an organization is serious about supporting working women and moving women into leadership roles, then the culture of most organizations must change. And the source of the culture in most organizations lies at the top. Thus, CEOs, or at least the people in the C-suite of organizations, must be committed to having this happen in their organizations. Culture is often determined by how people at the top behave. If they make disparaging comments about women in the organization, others will feel that this is appropriate behavior and will follow suit. On the other hand, if women are invited to participate equally in a meeting, and if their contributions to a discussion are honored, without interruption, then the organization will learn that this behavior is also expected of them. If inappropriate behavior is addressed immediately, then the organizational members will learn that they must avoid such behavior themselves.

Listening to women in the workplace, either through periodic surveys or in group interviews, top management will soon learn (once trust is established) what issues still need to be addressed for women to feel safe and have barriers to leadership addressed. This will not be easy, as several aspects of the Chinese culture that are embedded into organizational culture are the sources of barriers to women in leadership. These include the Confucian concept of hierarchy with men being above women, so-called respect in which women must allow men to speak and then invite them to speak, interruption of women being acceptable, while interruption of men by women is not, and so on.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter with the suggestion that government legislation could reduce the number of informal, after-work meals and drinks, so, too, could the corporate culture encourage the reduction of such meetings. Not only will this reduce the pressure on all employees, but also, and especially, women, to participate in such meals when they are uncomfortable with this practice; it will also encourage all employees to return home to have dinner with their families, enhancing family life.

With the change in inheritance laws, more and more, daughters and wives are inheriting businesses from their fathers and husbands (Chen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, barriers continue to exist for women in entrepreneurships. Because it was not automatically assumed that they would take over the business, they often have not had the same experiences as men would have had in being prepared for business management. Further, because they are unlikely to have a social network of men, who

are likely to be their suppliers and clients, it is more difficult for them to develop their markets and their supply chains. With time, this will change, but it will take time. Chen et al. (2018) found that women's leadership in entrepreneurial family firms differs from men's; women are likely to be more participative in decision making, more attuned to work-family balance, and more dependent on family resources. This may be difficult for employees in early stages of the business, until they become comfortable with such a management style.

AGRICULTURE

Because we were unable to recruit authors competent to write about Chinese women in leadership roles in agriculture, we do not have such a chapter. However, the role of women in agriculture is much too important in China to ignore.

Traditionally, women in rural areas were thought of as *left behind* as their husbands moved into cities for better-paying jobs, leaving their wives, children, and elders behind to cope as best they could. However, this concept has now been re-imagined (Zhang, 2020). As China struggles with its food supply security, women are no longer finding themselves left behind, but they have found ways to exert leadership in agriculture through both production and distribution.

By moving to an organic farming model, and by using some of the techniques from the west, women have established peasant farmer cooperatives, sell their produce in farmers' markets, have explored the concept of farm to consumer buying clubs by selling boxes of products directly to consumers, and selling fresh produce directly to restaurants, among other community-initiated concepts. As such, they are no longer dependent on their husbands sending money back home or returning home without financial support. Another way in which women are exerting leadership in agriculture is through university-farm partnerships to research ways to increase yields while using less fertilizer and pesticides.

Too often, discussions about agriculture ignore the contributions that women make throughout the agricultural cycle. As is becoming increasingly clear, such discussions in China cannot ignore women's contributions. Chinese women are increasingly taking leadership roles in improving China's agriculture.

CONCLUSION

In spite of all of the work that has gone into the production of this book, and in spite of the hundreds of references that the authors have researched, I still do not know everything that confronts Chinese women searching for management opportunities in China. Neither, then, do I know what might be done to change things for the better for women, nor how likely it is that any of our recommendations might be implemented. Therefore, I close with a quote from Doyle (2019):

Most of what we do know is that we don't know hardly anything, which cheers me up wonderfully. The world is still stuffed with astonishment beyond our wildest imagining, which is humbling, and lovely, and may be the only way we are going to survive ourselves and let everything else alive survive us too. (p. 121)

Just as a chrysalis ultimately gives birth to a butterfly, and just as a woman gives birth usually after extensive pain, it is our hope that the pain of this work and the beauty of what has resulted will give birth to extensive change for Chinese women as they move assertively into equity and positions of leadership.

REFERENCES

- Chen, S., Fang, H. C., & Wu, B. (2018). Female leadership in contemporary Chinese family firms. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Management*, 38, 181–211. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10490-017-9515-2>
- Doyle, B. (2019). *One long river of song*. Little Brown.
- Habib, N. (2019). Caring for carers in Liaoning Province: Strengthening elderly workforce in the People's Republic of China. *ADB Briefs*. Asia Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/579991/adb-brief-123-strengthening-elderly-workforce-prc.pdf>
- James, G. (2021, July 1). *Why there are so few women in Chinese politics*. <https://supchina.com/2021/07/01/why-there-are-so-few-women-in-chinese-politics/>
- Macrotrends. (2022). *China life expectancy 1950–2022*. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CHN/china/life-expectancy>
- Shiyu, Z. (2021, May 18). China hopes more day care reduce cost of having kids. *Sixth Tone*. <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1006955/china-hopes-more-day-care-will-reduce-cost-of-having-kids>

- Sun, L. (2022, February 2). China to delay retirement ages ‘gradually’ by 2025, after holding firm for seven decades. *Xinhua*. <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3167985/china-delay-retirement-ages-gradually-2025-after-holding-firm>
- van der Merwe, B. (2021, November 9). Weekly data: How China became an AI powerhouse. *Investment Monitor*. <https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/analysis/weekly-data-how-china-became-an-ai-powerhouse>
- Xinhua*. (2021, May 2). *China sees number of nursing homes rise to 38,000*. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-02/05/c_139724294.htm
- Yang, J. (2017). Gendered division of domestic work and willingness to have more children in China. *Democratic Research*, 37(62), 1949–1972. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26332249?seq=1>
- Yi, B. L. (2019, February 22). *China tells employers to stop asking women about marriage and babies*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-women-rights/china-tells-employers-to-stop-asking-women-about-marriage-and-babies-idUSKCN1QB1MX>
- Zhang, L. (2020). From left behind to leader: Gender, agency, and food sovereignty in China. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37, 1111–1123. <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10460-020-10114-9>

INDEX

A

Academia, 7, 23, 24

Academic achievement. *See*

Achievement, achievements

Academy of Human Resource
Development (AHRD), 2, 7

Achievement, achievements, 28, 52,
81, 86, 87, 89, 104, 112, 126,
127, 140, 154, 232, 270

Adjustment, 21, 25, 172

Administrators, 145, 184

Agriculture, agricultural, 21, 36, 115,
116, 118, 215, 286, 296

AI. *See* Artificial intelligence

All-China Federation of Trade Unions
(ACFTU), 124, 128

All-China Women's Federation
(ACWF), 22, 37, 39, 40, 45, 80,
81, 122, 124, 128, 195

Analects, 253

Androcentric bias. *See* Bias

Anglo culture, 51, 52

Anti-gender discrimination movement,
101

Artificial intelligence, 36, 289

Asia, Asian

Asian countries and regions, 32,
124, 165, 228–231, 233,
235–240, 248, 290

Asian Women in Leadership Summit
(AWLS), 124

Aspiration, 28, 49, 193, 276

Assessment, 101

Athletics, 288, 290

Australia, 123, 248, 266–268,
270–274, 277

Authority, 6, 20, 21, 26, 40, 52, 89,
92, 93, 149, 167, 178–180, 188,
194, 231, 233, 287

Autonomy, 32, 83, 205

Average, 17, 28, 37–39, 50, 56, 82,
87–90, 100, 119, 144, 145, 152,
168, 184, 249, 252, 262, 263,
266, 273, 292

annual income, 251

earned income, 251, 258, 261,
263, 266, 268
Awareness, 2, 3, 11, 27, 31, 90, 100,
102, 114, 160, 194, 210, 211,
219, 221, 222

B

Backlash, 37, 45, 55, 57
Balance, 3, 4, 23, 27, 30, 32, 78, 98,
103, 145, 150, 193, 235, 237,
249, 256, 264, 296
Bao, Tao, 84
Barriers, 30, 56, 127, 139, 143, 151,
156, 185, 190, 203, 208–210,
216, 271, 277, 295
Basic education, 143
Basic state policy, 72, 74, 81
Behavior patterns, behavioral pattern,
5, 26, 249
Belief, 2, 5, 7, 8, 50, 87, 154, 182,
187, 188, 249, 253, 254, 260,
262, 272, 275
Benevolent leadership, 248
Bias, 2, 9, 42, 44, 88, 101, 123, 156,
189, 193–195, 213
 androcentric bias, 11, 147, 151,
 157
 gender bias, 37, 120, 159, 211
Bigamy, 75
Birth control policies, 92
Birth-giving, 26
Boards, 83, 98, 126, 168, 275, 277
Bonding, 147
Bonuses, 292
Book knowledge. *See* Knowledge
Boy's games, xvii
Brazil, 95, 248, 261, 262, 268, 270,
271, 273, 275
Buddha, Buddhism, 229, 253–256

C

Capitalism, 45, 46, 50, 233, 234,
253, 255
Cardinal guides, 19
Career, careers
 career advancement, 41, 51, 52, 95,
 185, 235
 career development, 6, 10, 20, 53,
 95, 125, 126, 130, 150, 173,
 195, 208, 212, 216, 220, 221,
 228, 238, 240, 288, 289
 career development center, 7
 career path(s), 294
 career pursuit, 28
 career success, 41, 51, 209, 217,
 238
 career transition(s), 240
 career women, 75, 93, 96, 97
Care for Girls Campaign, 90
Caregiver, 54, 94, 256
Center for Women's Studies, 81
Certificate, certification, 219, 240
Challenges, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 30, 58,
73, 89, 97, 98, 100, 102, 116,
127, 129, 143, 147, 149, 156,
158, 159, 173, 194, 203, 209,
212, 213, 216, 218, 222, 294
Change, 2, 4, 5, 11–13, 22, 24, 26,
27, 29–31, 35, 36, 50, 57, 58,
71, 80, 96, 99, 103, 113,
115–117, 142, 148, 154, 157,
172, 174, 178, 186, 189, 192,
194–196, 207, 219, 228, 234,
237–240, 253, 254, 261, 271,
275, 286, 287, 291, 295–297
Characteristics, 5, 44, 54, 59, 139,
143, 147, 150, 155, 156, 179,
185, 208, 248, 250, 264, 278
Childbearing, 29, 78, 93, 95, 216,
257
Childbearing plan, 95
Childcare

- childcare services, 93, 96, 103
- Children, 19, 20, 27, 29, 38, 39, 41, 42, 44, 52, 53, 55, 74, 78, 79, 86, 92, 93, 95–97, 99, 103, 117–119, 130, 141, 153, 154, 167, 169–171, 174, 180, 188, 193, 207, 209–212, 221, 235–237, 251, 252, 254, 256–259, 261, 263–267, 275, 286–288, 292, 296
- China
- Chairman Mao, 17, 37, 45, 50, 55, 72, 114–116, 255
 - Mainland China, 6, 24, 143, 206, 227
 - Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, 78
 - New China, 72, 73, 75, 86, 92, 93, 114, 251, 255, 256
 - New China Women's Vocational School, 80
 - The People's Republic of China, 2, 3, 17, 19, 21, 35, 78, 112, 141, 166, 182
- China Resource Corporation, 123
- China Women's University (CWU), 80, 81, 122
- Chinese
- Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 21, 22, 35, 36, 39, 73, 98, 114, 116, 118, 124, 125, 130, 234, 251, 255, 256, 291
 - Chinese dream*, 36, 58
 - Chinese Epistemology, 19
 - Chinese government, 3, 22, 26, 38, 44, 50, 51, 58, 72, 79, 84, 85, 87, 88, 90, 92, 102, 111, 116–118, 128, 131, 144, 145, 154, 166, 169, 178, 179, 191, 195, 196, 205, 206, 234, 239, 250
 - Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), 72, 73, 81, 82, 97, 178, 179, 184
 - Chinese society, 2, 6, 18–21, 24, 28, 30, 32, 35, 36, 39, 41, 44, 50, 51, 76, 104, 155, 159, 185, 187, 191, 214, 252, 253, 255, 256, 270, 274
 - Chinese women, 2, 3, 6, 8–11, 17, 18, 20–22, 24–27, 30, 31, 36–42, 44–46, 49–59, 71–74, 80, 81, 83, 84, 86–88, 90, 93, 95–99, 104, 111–114, 116, 118, 121, 123, 124, 126–131, 140–142, 145, 149, 150, 155, 177, 185, 186, 189, 191–193, 196, 203, 204, 207, 209–211, 221, 228, 234, 235, 237, 254–256, 270, 275, 285–287, 291, 294, 296, 297
 - Chinese women homemaker, 72, 89
 - Chinese women housewife, 72
- Christian, Christianity, 140, 248, 259, 260, 264
- Civil liberties, 250
- Civil Service, 82
- Collaboration, 56, 103, 128, 155, 232, 239, 240, 286, 294
- Collectivism, collectivist, 5, 20, 59, 222, 230, 231, 250
- Communication, 48, 57, 148, 149, 166, 210, 221, 288
- communication movement, 257
- Communism, communist
- communist generation, 26
 - Communist Party Committee, 145, 151
 - Communist Youth League Committee, 122
- Community, 5, 80, 84, 146, 147, 159, 186, 187, 192, 196,

- 205–207, 213, 220, 230, 238,
249, 259, 285, 287, 296
community college, xviii, xix
Company, companies. *See*
Corporations
Competition, 22, 36, 49, 51, 94,
152, 173, 232, 237, 264
Compulsory education, 99, 117, 119,
120, 141, 143, 252
Conferences, 57, 81, 102, 124, 220,
293, 294
Conflict, 10, 23, 25, 27, 45, 51, 53,
54, 94, 150, 159, 173, 191, 276
Confucian, confucianism
confucian ideology, 94, 140
filial piety, 29, 94, 167, 170
harmony, 20, 59, 94, 254, 287
harmony in the family, 20, 54
social harmony, 77, 104
Congresswomen, 82
Constraints, 3, 41, 49, 51, 57–59,
115, 240
Consulting
consulting companies, 93
consulting service, 209
Context
Asian context, 12
domestic context, 10
non-Asian Context, 12
Contextual catalyst, 274
Contextual factors, 216, 222, 248,
268
Contextual impediment, 274, 275
Continuing education, 86, 87
Convergence, 12
Cooperative movement, 257
Cooperatives, 296
Corporate. *See* Corporations
Corporate universities, 123
Corporations, 123, 172, 173, 228,
238–240
Cosmology, 19
Country-specific, 104
County, 79, 80, 85, 91, 97, 128,
144, 152, 153, 158, 179, 191
Covid-19, 129, 239, 289, 294
Creativity, 120, 287, 289
Critical thinking, 288
Cuju (Chinese Women’s Football
Game), 55
Cult of Chastity, 253
Cultural and social norm(s), cultural
norms, cultural-social norm, 18,
19, 26, 30, 40, 47, 72, 88, 89,
95, 102, 104, 155, 187, 189,
193, 196, 228, 230, 237
Cultural aspect, 5
Cultural constrains, 19
Cultural contexts, 32, 278
Cultural differences, 49
Cultural factor(s), 222, 229, 249
Cultural Revolution, 26, 112, 115,
116, 142, 182, 234
Cultural traditions. *See* Tradition,
traditional
Culture, cultures, 5, 9, 10, 20, 23,
26, 27, 31, 36, 41, 42, 45–49,
51, 54, 56–59, 73, 74, 88, 112,
113, 129, 146, 149, 150, 157,
158, 165, 167, 173, 182, 186,
208, 222, 229–232, 235, 248,
249, 254, 256, 260, 262, 264,
267, 274, 275, 278, 279,
286–288, 294, 295
Culture Fusion, 27
- D**
Daoism, 253–256
Daughter(s), 7, 31, 37, 42, 47, 53,
76, 88, 118, 140, 167, 169, 170,
172–174, 180, 235, 238, 251,
261, 266, 270, 295
Daycare, 195, 238, 286, 292

- Decision-making, 1, 2, 21, 144, 149, 168, 179, 183, 190, 194, 216, 237, 258, 265, 270
- Development
 developmental areas, 75
 social security for women, 75
 women and health, 74
 women and the economy, 74
 women and the environment, 74
 women and the law, 74
 women in decision-making and management, 74
 women's education, 41, 42, 50, 74, 111, 113, 118, 141
- DINK (dual income and no kids), 29
- Director(s), 7, 54, 83, 98, 124, 144, 149, 228, 275, 277
- Discrimination. *See* Gender discrimination
- Discrimination against women, 22, 56, 92, 101, 102, 189, 254, 272, 275, 276
- Discriminatory family code, 249
- Discriminatory practices, 74, 87, 101, 257
- Dissonance, 28
- Divergence, 12, 196
- Diversity, 31, 45, 159, 220, 222, 240, 274, 275, 288
- Domestic context. *See* Context
- Domestic violence, 22, 40, 41, 75, 78, 191
- Double First-class initiative, 121
- Drinks, 149, 292, 295
- E**
- Early childhood education, 286
- E-commerce anchor, 27
- Economic development, 1, 22, 37, 50, 53, 72, 77, 100, 126, 145, 167, 173, 186, 192, 196, 227, 229, 236, 238, 255
- Economic factor, 273, 274
- Economic growth, 50, 115, 126, 166, 167, 174, 181, 192, 230, 236, 238, 248, 250, 273
- Economic participation, economic participation and opportunity
 Economic Participation Subindex, 87, 268
 labor force participation, 17, 50, 75, 83, 84, 87, 88, 91, 98, 104, 127, 208, 236, 249
 participation in the labor market, 103
- Economic reform(s), 3, 8, 35, 50, 56, 72, 94, 99, 114, 126, 166, 210, 228, 250, 255, 274
- Economics, economy, 74, 207
- Educational administration, 139, 142
- Educational attainment, 6, 52, 85, 91, 96, 120, 126, 127, 174, 268
- Educational opportunities, 20, 21, 116, 117, 128, 142, 274
- Education Attainment Subindex, 268
- Education system, 5, 11, 41, 92, 113, 117, 119, 120, 124, 143, 157, 159, 249
- Egalitarianism, 264, 287
- Egalitarian values, 52
- E generation, 26, 27
- Elderly, eldercare, 75, 89, 97, 180, 228, 238, 251, 252, 286
- Emotion, emotional, 53, 59, 147, 148, 217, 264, 277
- Empowerment, 6, 45, 47, 56, 57, 158, 169, 192, 193, 195, 209, 220–222, 228, 236, 271
- Engagement, 27, 80, 158, 233
- Enrollment rate, 119, 252, 259, 261, 262
- Enterprise reform, 88, 92

- Entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, 11, 23, 28, 30, 51, 166, 167, 169, 171, 174, 262, 285, 286, 295
- Equal. *See* Equality
- Equality, equal, 3, 22, 25, 50, 52, 75, 83, 114, 174, 189, 192, 220, 234, 256, 260, 264, 287
- gender equality, 1, 3, 5, 11, 17, 18, 21, 31, 36, 37, 47–49, 57–59, 71–75, 79, 81, 85–88, 90, 94, 104, 118, 119, 127, 128, 140–142, 158, 160, 169, 170, 177, 182, 183, 189, 191–196, 209–211, 213, 219, 220, 222, 228, 234, 237, 239, 241, 250, 253, 255, 256, 262, 264, 265, 271–275, 277
- Equity, 85, 120, 140–142, 154, 212, 219–222, 259, 286–289, 297
- Eradication of illiteracy, 85
- Ethic groups
- the Han people, 76
- Ethics, 51, 57, 124, 188, 233, 255, 290
- Executive, 4, 47, 54, 84, 147, 179, 221, 257, 265, 270
- Executive MBA, 124
- Executive organ, 73
- Expectations, 7, 10, 13, 23, 26, 28, 30, 53, 56, 102, 150, 155, 193, 230, 231, 235, 276, 287
- Expression, 31, 220
- Extracurricular activities, 288
- F**
- Faculty, 39, 141, 143, 144, 146, 155, 211
- Family business, 11, 31, 169, 171–174, 275
- Family harmony, 20
- Family members, 49, 53, 55, 140, 167, 170–174, 180, 190, 211, 238, 251, 259
- Family resources, 169, 296
- Family roles, 10, 18–20, 25, 26
- Family structures, 10, 76, 182, 259, 286
- Family support, 52, 53, 142, 159, 160, 238, 278
- Fate control, 5
- Female students, 141, 170
- Female successor, 172
- Female superman, 3
- Femininity, 155, 232, 254
- Feminism, feminist, 2, 3, 18–22, 37, 38, 40, 42, 45–47, 49, 54, 57, 59, 111, 112, 140, 182, 192, 203, 204, 221, 233, 239, 255, 260
- Feminist-inspired NGO, 221
- Fertility rate, 92, 252
- Fertility reduction, 76, 88
- Feudalism, 71, 88, 181
- Feudal society, 124, 251
- Filial piety, 29, 94, 167, 170
- Foot-binding, 55, 59
- Foreign affairs, 83
- international affairs, 83
- national diplomacy, 83
- Four virtues, 42, 112, 188
- Freedom, 21, 26, 27, 30, 55, 73, 189, 190, 192, 221, 232, 239, 250, 255, 256, 265
- Functions
- Committee functions, 79
- Future research, 140, 156, 157, 195, 196, 205, 222
- G**
- Games. *See* Boy's games; Girl's games
- Gap, gender gap, 1, 18, 22, 37–39, 48, 50–52, 77, 87–89, 95–97,

- 99, 100, 103, 104, 119–121, 126, 127, 129, 152, 158, 203, 204, 208, 212, 222, 228, 236, 251, 258, 261, 266–268, 270–273, 276
- GDP per capita, 250
- Gender-based
 cultural norms, 18, 40, 72, 95, 155, 196, 228
 discrimination, 75, 93
 hiring, 93
 perceptions, 101
- Gender-based Pay Gap, 22, 39, 52, 88, 96, 102, 251, 258, 261, 266
- Gender bias. *See* Bias
- Gender depictions, xviii
- Gender differences, 7, 50, 56, 100, 139, 147, 149, 151, 155, 156, 159, 278
- Gender discrimination, 2, 9, 31, 39, 40, 56, 78, 88–90, 95, 97, 101, 103, 151, 158, 180, 208, 213–215, 222
- Gender distribution, 85, 184
- Gender diversity, 5, 98, 209, 227, 250, 275
- Gendered, 104, 120, 127, 149, 170, 189, 193
 gendered division of labor, 89
- Gendered role, 98
- Gender egalitarianism, 5, 230, 231, 250, 288
- Gender equality. *See* Equality
 principle, 1, 22
 women's equality, 74, 234
 women's equal rights, 72, 74, 80, 81, 187, 190, 191
- Gender gap
 gender earning gap, gender pay gap, 22, 39, 52, 88, 97, 102, 104
 gender gap in earnings, 96
 gender gap report, 50
 gender wage penalty, 96, 97
- Gender identity, 28, 29, 42, 48
- Gender imbalance, 91, 125, 193, 257
- Gender impact, 213
- Gender income inequality, 39, 96
- Gender inequality, 9, 22, 30, 31, 44, 50, 52, 99, 187, 189, 193, 194, 196, 230, 231, 236, 253, 272
- Gender issues, 205, 209, 215, 216, 219, 220, 222, 253
- Genderless/gender-free perspectives, 147, 151
- Gender parity, 87, 96, 250
- Gender preference, 78
- Gender roles, 44, 52, 57, 170, 237, 241, 274, 275
- Gender selection, 76
- Gender stereotype(s), gender stereotyping, 5, 31, 89, 145, 150, 155, 157, 170, 214, 239, 250, 251, 254, 272, 273, 276
- Girl's games. *See* Games
- Glass ceiling, glass ceiling effect, 25, 53, 55, 56, 97, 145, 191, 194, 261, 273–278
- Glass cliff*, 56
- Global Gender Gap Index, 87, 97, 251
- Globalization, 20, 44, 167, 192, 286, 294
- Globalization process, 2
- Goals, 2, 5, 6, 36, 38, 42, 45, 49, 53, 57, 75, 80, 85, 90, 96, 114, 118, 119, 124, 146, 154, 167, 170, 192, 204, 221, 232, 234, 239, 275
- Goddess of Compassion, 254
- Government, 2, 3, 11, 18, 20–22, 31, 37, 40, 45, 55, 72, 74, 79–85, 87, 90–92, 94–99, 102, 103, 112, 114, 115, 117–119, 121,

124, 125, 128, 129, 143, 144,
153, 155, 158, 168, 177–179,
181–186, 188, 190, 191,
193–196, 204–207, 211, 216,
221, 234, 236, 238–240, 252,
255, 257, 260, 262, 265, 267,
274, 275, 277, 285, 286, 288,
289, 291–293, 295
Grassroots, 22, 32, 38, 40, 83, 184,
205, 206, 212, 214, 216, 293
Grassroots Administration, 83
Great Leap Forward, 115
Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 35,
40, 50, 167, 249, 261, 262, 266
Gross National Product (GNP), 249
Guanxi, 54, 123, 129, 185
Guanyin, 254

H

Hacking, 290
Hardships, 30
Harmonious and productive family,
94
Harmonious society, 72
Harmony, 54, 59, 77, 94, 104, 254,
287
Health and survival, health and
survival subindex, 268–271
Healthy life expectancy rate, 252
Hierarchy, hierarchical, 19, 123, 180,
181, 183, 187, 232, 236, 287,
295
Higher education, 11, 23, 24, 31, 52,
86, 114–116, 118, 121, 123,
124, 127, 141–143, 145, 148,
151, 152, 154, 157, 159, 170,
192, 195, 252, 259, 262, 263,
274
Hindu, Hinduism, 229, 237
Hiring, 78, 99, 292
History, historical, 10, 11, 19, 23, 24,
41, 44, 55, 57, 71, 75, 82,

111–113, 123, 140, 159, 181,
187–189, 192, 194, 204,
228–230, 261, 264, 270, 275
Home, 7, 8, 21, 24, 28, 40–43, 59,
72, 89, 92, 93, 95, 96, 103, 114,
117, 140, 153, 167, 180, 188,
236, 237, 239, 241, 251, 257,
259, 276, 278, 285–288, 290,
293, 295, 296
Homemaker, 72, 89, 94, 180, 189,
192, 259
House chores. *See* Housework
Housework, 23, 24, 43, 52, 75, 89,
103, 113, 235, 236, 255, 276,
286, 287
domestic work, 42, 52, 89, 228,
237

Hukou law, 117

Human capital, human capital index,
5, 25, 47, 111, 169, 249, 250,
258, 261, 262, 266

Human health, 5, 249

Human resource development
(HRD), 2, 4, 18, 111, 117, 123,
129

Human resource management
(HRM), 4, 31

Human resources, 9, 195

Husband, 7, 19–21, 23, 24, 27,
40–44, 51–54, 73, 75, 79, 96,
103, 140, 152, 167, 168, 171,
172, 180, 181, 185, 187, 188,
190, 192, 193, 204, 235–238,
240, 251, 253, 256, 287, 295,
296

I

Identity, 2, 10, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30,
32, 45–48, 53, 54, 59, 96, 127,
154, 158, 159, 173, 234, 239,
241

Image, 27, 147, 204, 236, 276

- Imbalance of sex ratio, imbalanced sex ratio, 88, 90, 91, 102
- Implementation, 30, 72, 76, 91, 93, 117, 125, 288
- Implications, 12, 13, 32, 72, 112, 129, 268, 277, 278
- Impoverished women, 85
- Incentive(s), 96, 103, 278
- Income earner, 94
- Income inequality index, 249
- Incumbents, 174
- Independent, 7, 32, 54, 103, 143, 178, 185, 192, 207, 251, 286
- India, 86, 126, 229, 231, 236, 237, 254, 273
- Indicators, 5, 83, 268
- Indigenizing, indigenous, 3, 113, 130, 264
- Individual, individualistic, individualism, 4, 5, 20, 49, 51, 52, 56, 59, 91, 100, 124, 148, 167, 186, 187, 205, 206, 212, 230–232, 234, 235, 238, 241, 250, 252, 253, 256, 263, 264, 267, 275, 278, 290
- Indonesia, 18, 126, 231, 236
- Industry, 27, 126, 128, 129, 214, 219, 238, 293
- Inequality, 50, 52, 93, 99, 100, 236, 254
- Inheritance rights, 251, 258, 261, 263, 266
- Innovation, 36, 154, 155, 158, 230, 262, 289
- Institutional barriers, 149, 151
- Institutional support, 72, 79
- Institutional system, 79
- International comparison, 10
- International interest, xviii
- International sojourners, xviii
- International universities, 123
- Interpersonal relationship, 149, 158
- Intersectionality/intersectional, 45, 188
- Investment, 21, 25, 27, 36, 52, 127, 141, 142, 167, 191, 207, 230
- Iron woman, 3, 25, 47, 54
- Islam, 237
- Isolation, 229
- J**
- Japan, 50, 113, 126, 166, 187, 228, 229, 231–233, 235–238, 294
- Job opportunities, 7, 21, 27, 75, 251
- Judicial Enforcement, 102
- K**
- K-12, K-12 education, 11, 119, 120
- Knowledge, 3, 7, 11, 20, 31, 46, 58, 59, 84, 102, 192, 195, 204, 206, 218, 219, 221, 236, 253
- Korea, 187, 229, 232, 235
South Korea, 50, 126, 228, 229, 231–233, 235–238, 294
- L**
- Labor, 36, 76–78, 84, 90, 94, 96, 97, 99, 103, 116, 118, 121, 167, 208, 227, 233, 236, 238, 251, 255–257, 272–274, 276
- Labor force, 21, 24, 39, 40, 50, 92, 96, 115, 127, 208, 228, 236, 257
- Labor force participation, 17, 50, 75, 83, 84, 87, 88, 91, 98, 104, 127, 208, 236, 249
- Labor insurance regulations, 76, 234
- Labor policies, 29, 91
- Labor protection for women workers, 84
- Law enforcement, 101, 104, 290
- Lawmakers, 73, 82, 102

- national lawmaking, 73
 - policymakers, 87, 100, 101, 116, 159, 191, 205, 221
 - Laws and regulations, 10, 72, 73, 75, 77, 81, 93, 96, 100–102
 - Lay-off, 22
 - Leader, 2–6, 9–13, 17, 20, 23, 24, 31, 32, 36, 49, 51–59, 73, 104, 111–114, 116, 119–131, 139, 140, 142–148, 150, 151, 154–160, 171, 173, 177–179, 182–186, 188, 189, 191–196, 204, 208, 209, 213–222, 228, 233, 235, 237–241, 248–253, 255, 259, 267, 272–279, 290, 291, 293, 294
 - Leadership. *See also* Women in leadership; Women's leadership
 - leadership ambitions, 8
 - leadership attributes, 148, 185
 - leadership development, 6, 8, 11, 12, 31, 36, 40, 53, 56, 58, 111, 112, 116, 119, 121–124, 127, 129, 130, 139–143, 146, 147, 150–152, 156–160, 178, 195, 204, 205, 208, 209, 212, 213, 215, 218, 220, 222, 237, 239, 241, 248, 268
 - Leadership development training, 218
 - Leadership traits, 2
 - Legal governance, 82
 - Legal infrastructure, 78
 - Legal Obstacle, 89
 - Legal system, 72, 74, 79
 - Legislation, 5, 31, 72, 73, 75–78, 81, 87, 89–91, 93, 100, 101, 104, 190, 193, 238, 239, 257, 286, 292, 295
 - Legislative. *See* Legislation
 - Legislative and political environments
 - Legal and Policy Foundations, 73
 - legal foundation, 74
 - legislative and political structures, 10
 - Legislator, legislators, 97, 100, 102, 127
 - Legislature, 82, 178
 - Lens, 10, 11, 36, 49, 51, 140, 148, 155, 159
 - Liao dynasty, 113
 - Libationer, 254
 - Libertarian feminism, 256
 - Lingdao*, 4
 - Literacy rate, 252, 258, 261, 266, 268
 - Local, 8, 82, 93, 101, 116, 117, 129, 130, 143, 144, 149, 150, 153, 158, 178, 179, 182–184, 191, 192, 196, 206, 207, 230, 262, 285, 291
 - Long hours, 51
 - Long-term care for elders/elderly. *See* Elderly, eldercare
- M**
- Majors, 122, 288
 - Malaysia, 126, 231
 - Male-dominated, 24, 148, 149, 173, 216, 222
 - Management, 3, 24, 48, 52, 81, 103, 122, 146, 158, 207, 215, 218, 219, 221, 230, 237, 239, 240, 247, 248, 270, 273, 275, 277, 278, 290, 292, 295–297
 - Management and leadership program, 128, 221
 - Management development, 125
 - Mandate, mandates, 263, 290, 291, 294
 - Maoism, 253
 - Market, 2, 3, 7, 22, 26, 29, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46, 58, 76, 84, 91, 94, 96, 99, 103, 116, 118, 121, 166,

- 167, 172, 174, 191, 207, 227,
250, 256, 290, 294, 296
- Marriage, 21, 22, 26–28, 38–41, 43,
52, 58, 74–76, 78, 79, 91,
93–95, 140, 152, 180, 188–190,
204, 216, 233–241, 257, 287
- Marriage plan, 43
- Masculinity, 155, 232, 239, 254
- Maternity insurance, maternity
insurance system, 76, 77
- Maternity leave, 39, 76, 77, 92, 99,
216, 235, 237, 240, 257, 274,
276, 292
- Matriarchal clan system, 71
- MBA, 7, 9
- Meals, 180, 292, 295
- Mentoring, mentorship, 123, 186,
195, 196, 217, 220, 240
- Metamorphosis, 285
- Military, 122, 123, 143, 181, 289,
291
- Millionaires, 27, 167
- Mindset, 26, 31, 59, 154, 158, 159,
232, 259
- Ministry of Education, 38, 80,
119–122, 142, 143, 145, 155,
252
- Ministry of Organization, 125
- Minority, minorities, 56, 90, 114,
145, 214, 215, 218, 264
- Model, 17, 29, 50, 103, 143, 146,
153, 166, 211, 218, 231, 232,
241, 288, 296
- Motherhood penalty, 95
- Mother, motherhood, 3, 6, 7, 25, 26,
28, 42, 47, 53, 55, 93, 95–97,
116, 127, 153, 169, 171, 180,
188, 193, 209, 233, 235–237,
252, 253, 265, 274, 276, 292
- Motivation, 3, 53, 144
- Multitasking, 23
- Municipal, 79, 179, 194, 263, 291
- Muslim, 229
- Myanmar, 229, 236
- N**
- Nation, 1, 13, 22, 36, 55, 56, 58,
114, 124, 125, 128, 159, 177,
179, 194, 249, 287
- National Bureau of Statistics of China,
82–84, 86, 99, 100, 142, 167,
184, 192
- National Congress, 78
- National Coordination Committee, 79
- National group, 5, 249
- Nationality, 248, 262
- National Program for Women's
Development, 74, 83, 99, 183
- National Working Committee on
Children and Women
(NWCCW), 79
- Neighborhood committee, 83
- Neo-Confucianism, 42
- Neo-familism, 29
- Networking, 158, 195, 239
- Networks. *See* Networking
- New Culture Movement, 140
- NGOs, 11, 12, 128, 129, 204–222,
286, 293. *See also*
Non-governmental organizations
- NGO women leaders, 12, 204, 212
- Noble enlightened leaders, 253
- Non-Asian comparison, 12
- Non-governmental organizations, 81,
128, 204, 205, 222, 286
- Non-profit organizations, 222, 286,
293
- Norm, 5, 18, 19, 49, 88–90, 102,
103, 127, 151, 156, 186, 188,
189, 240, 249, 278, 290
- NPOs. *See* Non-profit organizations
- Nurseries, 103, 292

O

- Obligation, 10, 36, 51, 53, 167, 170, 186, 188, 190, 193, 221
- Obstacles, 2, 3, 12, 25, 31, 89, 99, 151, 173, 177, 237
- Occupational gender segregation, 96
- Occupation(s), occupational, 29, 96–98, 155, 182, 214, 234, 291, 292
- OECD, 12, 85, 87, 89, 117–120, 235, 248, 251, 258, 260, 265
- One-child policy (OCP), 11, 28, 31, 37, 76, 88, 91, 92, 102, 118, 119, 126, 127, 168, 172, 235, 250, 252, 253, 257, 258, 274
- One-party management, 93
- Open-door policy, open-door policies, 3, 8, 72, 82, 126, 191, 192
- Opinion, 31, 40, 148, 205, 206, 218, 220, 241, 255
- Opportunities, 2–7, 10, 11, 20, 25, 26, 28, 31, 36–38, 49, 56, 58, 72, 76, 78, 84, 90, 95, 99, 102, 103, 112, 114, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 125, 127, 129–131, 142, 144, 146, 149, 152, 154, 158, 159, 166, 173, 174, 180, 182, 186, 190–192, 194–196, 207–210, 214, 215, 217, 218, 220–222, 240, 249, 250, 253, 255, 263, 268, 274, 289–291, 293, 294, 297
- Oppression against women, 75, 270
- Organizational culture, 130, 157, 194, 239, 295
- Organizational leaders, 73, 100, 102, 146, 159
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *See* OECD
- Organization, organizational, 3, 4, 11, 17, 18, 21, 25, 31, 47, 54–56,

76, 78–82, 87, 122, 124, 125, 128, 148, 157, 171, 178, 182, 190, 195, 205–207, 209–222, 228, 230, 231, 233, 236, 240, 241, 260, 273, 276, 278, 288–290, 293, 295

P

- Paradox, 20, 93, 96, 129
- Parent(s), 7–9, 28, 43, 50, 52, 90, 92, 93, 96, 117, 167, 169–171, 173, 174, 188, 193, 210, 212, 235, 257, 259, 263–265, 287, 288, 292
- Parliament, 2, 73, 82, 98, 178, 236, 258, 265–267, 273
- Participation in Business Management, 83
- Partnerships (family-farm, farm-university), 296
- Party members, 82, 93
- Paternalistic, 20, 123, 235
- Paternal leave. *See* Paternity leave
- Paternity leave, 96
- Patriarchal, 24, 31, 46–48, 51, 54, 55, 57, 59, 125, 167, 182, 188, 189, 191, 233, 235, 238, 253, 256, 276
- feudalism, 71
- feudalism feudal ideology, 72
- Patriarchal society, 23, 41, 43, 46, 48
- Patriarchy, 48, 104, 270
- Pay gap. *See* Gender-based pay gap
- Performance, 24, 45, 117, 193, 215, 216, 227, 228, 230, 235, 248, 270, 271
- Personality, 44, 147, 148, 185, 213
- Personal power, 4
- Planning, 76, 146, 148, 169, 218, 230, 292, 294
- Plans, 73, 80, 93, 141, 158, 178, 183, 292

- Police, policing, 115, 267, 292
- Policies, 2, 5, 11, 21, 22, 29–31, 40, 50, 51, 59, 72, 76, 82, 91, 95, 103, 111, 112, 115–117, 119, 120, 122, 124, 125, 128, 130, 131, 141, 151, 159, 178, 179, 183, 190, 192, 195, 196, 203–207, 210, 218, 221, 228, 234, 237, 238, 240, 250, 251, 257, 258, 264, 275, 278
- Political advocacy, 274
- Political aspect, 5
- Political empowerment, 37, 87, 208, 267, 268, 276
- Political Empowerment Subindex, 269, 270
- Political factor, 144, 250
- Political freedom, 5, 250
- Political obstacle, 94
- Political rights, 91, 191, 250
- Political Standing Committee, 2, 258
- Political structure, 177, 178, 183, 206
- Political systems, 5
- Political voice, 5, 250, 258, 260, 262, 265, 267
- Politics, 73, 74, 97, 184, 196, 229, 273, 275, 285, 286
- Population, 5, 19, 26, 45, 71, 76, 84, 92, 94, 102, 118, 119, 143, 167–169, 229, 247, 249–252, 263, 266, 267, 287
- Population and family planning
- family planning, 73, 75, 76, 88, 92, 93, 98, 169, 190, 193, 194
- one-child policy, 11, 28, 31, 37, 76, 88, 91, 92, 102, 118, 119, 126, 127, 169, 172, 235, 250, 252, 253, 257, 258, 274
- Post-COVID-19 world, 131
- Post-modernism, 20, 48
- Post-secondary education, 28, 252
- Poverty alleviation, 117, 205
- plan, 85
- policy, 85
- Practices, 5, 12, 30, 45, 54, 55, 73, 78, 93, 99, 101, 102, 112, 116, 123, 130, 131, 140, 147, 151, 152, 156, 157, 159, 187, 194–196, 204, 205, 213, 219, 221, 233, 239, 240, 249, 253, 255, 257, 265, 277, 279, 292–295
- Predicament, 24, 189
- Pregnancy, 37–39, 75, 77, 78, 95, 257, 267, 292
- Pre-primary education, 86
- Primary caregiver, 40, 103, 259
- Primary education, 86, 114, 115, 117, 252
- Principals, vice-principals, 141, 143, 144, 146–151, 155, 156
- Priorities, 71
- Private business, 11, 166, 173
- Private sector, 84, 104, 167, 173, 190, 204, 249, 266
- Program, 22, 74–76, 80, 84–86, 112, 117, 121, 123, 124, 128, 143, 145, 150, 157, 158, 170, 183, 191, 192, 194, 195, 206, 209–211, 215, 218, 220, 236, 240, 255, 278, 288, 289
- Projects 211 and 985, 121, 154
- Promotion, 20, 22, 24, 31, 38, 49, 74, 95, 142, 144, 149–151, 174, 186, 194, 208, 221, 258, 277, 291
- Protester, 22
- Province, provincial, 28, 52, 79, 80, 117, 119, 128, 143, 144, 152, 169, 177–179, 183, 184, 194, 196, 291
- Public servants, 82, 204

Q

- Qing dynasty, 19, 20, 113, 181, 233
 Quota, quotas, 30, 75, 81, 91, 94,
 118, 122, 125, 191, 194, 196,
 271, 273, 275, 278, 288, 291

R

- Recognition, 30, 31, 56
 Recommendations, 12, 18, 82, 100,
 102, 140, 156, 178, 205, 297
 Recruit. *See* Recruitment
 Recruitment, 22, 77, 78, 150, 194,
 208, 220, 221, 234, 240
 Reform, 82, 92, 99, 112, 116, 119,
 120, 139, 141, 142, 153, 154,
 158, 166, 207, 210, 234
 Region, 50, 79, 80, 90, 100, 119,
 150, 178, 196, 227–229, 236,
 270, 293, 294
 Regional development, 99, 142, 150,
 157, 159
 Regional discrimination, 90
 Religion, 5, 46, 57, 229, 249, 253,
 254, 256, 259, 262, 264, 265,
 267, 275
 Research, 2, 8, 9, 11, 12, 24, 29, 30,
 39, 41, 48, 50, 52, 53, 56, 80,
 81, 89, 97, 111, 112, 121, 123,
 126, 128–131, 139, 142, 143,
 146, 147, 149, 154, 156, 157,
 159, 167, 169, 171, 196, 204,
 205, 209, 210, 212, 222, 230,
 240, 247, 270, 277–279, 286,
 296
 Research and development, 36, 154,
 289
 Responsibilities, responsibility, 4, 25,
 74, 78, 80, 92–94, 96, 103, 127,
 146, 150, 155, 169, 178, 180,
 187, 188, 191, 193, 207, 208,
 214, 216, 228, 240, 276

- Retirement, 38, 90, 204, 211, 234,
 266, 291
 Risky work, 292
 Role model, 149, 217, 221, 240, 294
 Roles, 2, 3, 5, 11, 17, 19, 22, 23,
 25–30, 39, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56,
 72, 76, 80, 83, 89, 94, 98, 104,
 114, 116, 118, 122, 125, 126,
 128, 131, 141, 144, 146,
 149–151, 155, 159, 165, 168,
 169, 172, 174, 179, 180, 187,
 188, 204, 207, 208, 220–222,
 228, 231, 233, 238, 240, 241,
 247–249, 252, 253, 257, 259,
 272–274, 276, 285–287, 290,
 292–296
 Rural, 3, 21, 39, 89, 99, 117, 118,
 141, 142, 150, 152, 169, 193,
 196, 207, 210–212, 214, 221,
 234, 251, 259
 Rural China, 38, 41, 51, 100, 120,
 211
 Rural women, 85, 99, 115, 210

S

- School(s), 5, 7, 8, 80, 85, 87, 99,
 101, 113–115, 117, 119–121,
 125, 139–149, 152–154, 156,
 158, 170, 180, 182, 187, 191,
 204, 212, 234, 235, 249, 252,
 261, 263, 265, 277, 287, 288
 Secondary education, 86, 155, 157,
 252, 259, 261, 265, 266, 271
 Secondary vocational schools, 87
 Second generation, 172
 Second-generation women
 entrepreneurs, 28
 Secretaries, 145, 179, 184, 291
 Sector(s), 11, 12, 21, 39, 74, 83, 84,
 97, 104, 116, 128, 140, 142,
 146, 147, 150, 152, 155, 156,
 158, 159, 177, 178, 180, 182,

- 183, 186, 190–196, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213–215, 217–220, 222, 239, 291
- Sector view, 10
- Self-actualization, 20, 57
- Self-directed learning, 219
- Self-efficacy, 5, 195, 218, 222, 250, 256, 276
- Self-esteem, 46
- Self-positioning, 173
- Self-reliant, 7
- Senior executives, 98
- Senior leadership, 268, 285, 286
- Senior manager, senior management, 17, 83, 208, 239, 268, 272, 273
- Senior secondary education, 86, 141, 143, 252
- Sex imbalance at birth, 88
- Sex rate Imbalance, 88
- Sex ratio, 37, 76, 88, 90, 170, 250, 252, 263
- Sex ratio at birth, 37, 88, 90, 91, 252, 263
- Sexual harassment, 40, 76, 211, 219
- Single, 7, 28, 31, 38, 42, 43, 50, 82, 179, 235
- Singletons, 118, 257
the loneliest generation, 91
- Single woman, 37, 38, 94, 96, 97, 235
- Small business, 84, 275, 277
- Social aspect, 5
- Social capital, 185
- Social expectations, 18, 25, 28, 53, 173
- Social factor, 249
- Socialism, socialist, 2, 36–39, 45, 48, 50, 59, 114, 118, 166, 234, 249, 250, 255
- Socialist feminism, 45, 256
- Social media, 40, 46, 290
- Social norms, 19, 26, 30, 47, 88, 89, 104, 187, 189, 193, 230, 237
- Social relations, 186
- Social status, 2, 10, 18–21, 30, 31, 52, 55, 71, 72, 88, 149, 189, 214, 234
- Social stereotype, 20, 127, 151
- Social value, 18, 156, 182, 233, 234
- Society, 1, 2, 5, 11, 18, 23, 26, 29, 31, 32, 41, 42, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 55, 73, 87, 94, 104, 116, 118, 119, 140, 165, 167–169, 173, 180, 181, 185, 187–190, 193, 196, 205, 208, 216, 222, 231, 232, 236, 237, 239, 241, 248–250, 252–254, 256, 259, 262, 264, 270, 273, 275–277, 289
- Socio-economics, 17, 84, 103, 116, 196, 237
- Socio-economic support, 274
- SOE. *See* State-owned enterprise
- Son bias, 76, 89
- Son preference, strong preference for boys, 90, 91, 237
- Spousal support, 51
- Stakeholders, 54, 103, 130, 131, 148
- Standing Committee (of the CCP), 2, 258
- Start-up rations, 167
- State organ, 73
- State-owned enterprises, 39, 92, 98, 99, 204
- Stay-at-home mothers, 96
- Stereotype, 25, 40, 88, 89, 102, 144, 150, 155, 159, 173, 185, 188, 193, 220
- Strategies for leadership development, 213, 217
- Strengths, 11, 21, 54, 234, 241, 286
- Students, 7, 39, 40, 86, 115, 117, 119–122, 124, 140–143, 152,

- 153, 170, 182, 187, 192, 212,
252, 261, 263, 287–289
- Study abroad, 118, 122, 288
- Success, successful, 6, 11, 20, 23, 26,
30, 46, 52, 54, 57, 87, 92, 94,
118, 150, 152, 166, 167, 171,
193, 194, 204, 208, 232, 235,
247, 248, 250, 262, 270, 274,
275, 277, 288, 290, 293
- Sun, Chunlan, 290
- Supervisors, 83, 102, 149, 150, 193
- Supply chain, 294, 296
- Support for leadership development,
53, 119, 151, 217, 222
- T**
- Taiwan, 35, 237
- Talent, 9, 36, 58, 140, 181, 206,
218, 227, 237, 238, 240, 278
- Talent development, 240
- Teacher, 85, 115, 143–147, 149,
152, 155, 158, 189, 211, 253,
254, 287–289
- Teacher education, 115, 288, 289
- Technology, 28, 36, 113, 122, 126,
129, 155, 166, 181, 257, 275,
286, 289, 290
- Thailand, Thai, 18, 231, 236, 237
- The accelerator model, 103
- The Anti-domestic Violence Law, 78,
82
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform
for Action, 74
- The Central People's Government, 73
- The Chinese government, 3, 22, 26,
38, 44, 51, 58, 72, 79, 84, 85,
87, 88, 90, 92, 102, 116–118,
128, 131, 144, 145, 154, 166,
179, 191, 195, 196, 205, 206,
234, 239, 250
- The Civil Code, 79
- The Civil Law, 79
- The constitution, 30, 39, 73, 74, 166,
190, 265
- The Employment Promotion Law, 77,
78, 190
- The Family Happiness and Well-Being
Campaign, 80, 94
- The Labor Law, 77, 91
- The Little Red Pioneers, 130
- The Lost Generation, 26
- The Lucky Generation, 26
- The Marriage Law, 75, 257
- The Ministry of Justice, 78
- The Ministry of Labor and Social
Security, 78
- The Most Beautiful Family Campaign,
94
- The National People's Congress
(NPC), 72, 73, 77, 82, 97, 125,
178, 183, 184
- Theory, theories, 13, 19, 46, 112,
129, 130, 143, 146, 147, 149,
151, 156, 157, 187, 210, 234,
254, 256, 278, 279
- The Second Child Policy, 82
- The Standing Committee, 290
- The State Council, 73–75, 77, 79, 92,
179, 184, 257
- The State Council Information Office,
71, 72, 77, 81–87
- The State-owned Assets Supervision
and Administration Commission
(SASAC), 98
- The *sticky floor effect*, 97
- The Supreme People's Court, 78, 79,
102, 179
- The transformed generation, 6, 26
- The Women's Rights Protection Act,
91
- Three Cardinal Guides, 19, 41, 253
- Three-child policy, 92, 98
- Three obediences, 42, 112, 113, 188
- Tolerance, 32

Top leadership position, 97, 98, 248
Toxic masculinity, 48
 Trade, 35, 58, 181, 191, 230
 Trade union, 81, 84, 124
 Traditional perception, 192, 274, 275
 Tradition, traditional, 4, 6, 9, 19,
 21–24, 26, 30–32, 36, 37,
 40–48, 52, 53, 55, 57–59, 72,
 88, 94, 112, 113, 123, 125, 140,
 146, 150, 155, 170–172, 187,
 191, 195, 233, 235, 237–240,
 252, 253, 256, 257, 272, 274,
 275, 287, 288
 traditional beliefs, 275
 traditional cultures, 10, 13, 18–20,
 25, 26, 53, 159, 182
 Training, training and development,
 38, 80, 81, 85, 95, 102, 103,
 115, 123–125, 145, 149, 155,
 158, 159, 169, 194, 195, 209,
 210, 212, 215, 218–222, 228,
 240, 277
 Transdisciplinarity/transdisciplinary,
 59
 Transition, transitioning, 18, 30, 39,
 80, 166, 210
 Travel, 208, 288, 290
Tuanwei, 122

U

Uncertainty avoidance, 5, 230, 232,
 233, 250
 United Nations (UN), 45, 57, 83,
 129, 142, 189, 193, 205, 216,
 271
 United States, U.S., USA, 6–9, 87,
 113, 123, 127, 129, 166, 167,
 229, 248, 258–261, 268, 272,
 273, 289, 290, 294
 University, universities, 8, 9, 23, 24,
 39, 40, 81, 113, 115, 120–125,

127, 141, 143, 145, 151, 154,
 155, 159, 206, 258, 288
 Unpaid work, 89, 103
 Urban, 28, 37, 38, 51, 76, 99, 115,
 117, 118, 142, 152, 169, 191,
 212, 234, 238
 Urban and rural areas, 3, 21, 37, 39,
 83, 85, 99, 100, 115–119, 145,
 153, 158, 184, 210, 212, 214,
 251, 252, 263, 287–289, 296
 Urban China, 41, 96, 97, 233
 Urbanization, 253

V

Value, 3, 5, 6, 13, 18–21, 25–27,
 29–31, 38, 46, 53, 54, 87, 104,
 111, 123–125, 146, 147, 154,
 172, 187, 189, 191, 195, 213,
 229, 231–233, 235–237, 249,
 253
 Value-based impediment, 279
 Victim blame/blaming, 40, 47
 Video-Powered Retail, 27
 Village committee, 83
 Virtues, 20, 43, 113, 188, 253, 270
 Vocation, 254
 Vocational education, 86, 115, 121,
 143, 288
 Vocational Education and Training
 (VET), 120, 121
 Vocational school, 120

W

Western democracies, 4
 West, western, 2–4, 6, 13, 19, 26, 27,
 36, 44–46, 48, 50–54, 57–59,
 100, 113, 130, 140, 146, 181,
 182, 192, 206, 229, 230, 239,
 241, 248, 276, 278, 296
 Wife, 19, 23, 25–27, 41–44, 47,
 51–53, 73, 75, 79, 127, 170,

- 180, 185, 187, 188, 190, 193, 233, 235, 238, 252, 253, 257, 274
- Woman warrior, 113
- Women, 1–6, 9–11, 17–32, 37–59, 71–103, 111–116, 118, 119, 121–131, 139–145, 147–152, 154–160, 165, 167–169, 171–174, 177–196, 203–205, 207–222, 227–229, 233–241, 247–268, 270–279, 286–288, 290–296
- Women ambassador, 83
- Women career development, 20, 95, 125, 130, 195, 208, 216, 221, 238
- Women consul, 83
- Women counselor, 83
- Women entrepreneur(s), 11, 28, 52, 56, 84, 165, 169, 173, 238, 239, 275
- Women in business leadership, 98
- Women in leadership, 2, 3, 18, 104, 151, 159, 191, 203, 204, 208, 295, 296
- women in leadership. *See* Leadership
- women in leadership roles. *See* Roles
- Women in ministerial positions, 98, 194
- Women in professional and technical jobs, 84, 104
- Women's advancement, 11
- Women's all-round development, 87, 94, 104
- Women's development, 10, 45, 71–74, 79, 81, 87, 89, 102, 104, 125, 129, 139, 270, 271, 276
- Women's emancipation, 40, 80, 234
- Women's Equality Employment Rights, 77
- Women's federation, 72, 80, 82–84
- Women's leadership, 2, 4, 6, 9, 11–13, 36, 53, 54, 56, 58, 112, 116, 119, 124, 126, 129–131, 139–144, 147, 150, 151, 155–160, 178, 195, 196, 204, 205, 221, 222, 228, 229, 237, 239–241, 248, 249, 259, 268, 270–272, 274–279, 296
- Women's leadership development success, 6, 270
- Women's literacy, 85
- Women's perspective, 149, 151, 156
- Women's political participation, 81, 91, 99, 180, 190, 196, 221
- Women's reproductive rights, 76, 77
- Women's rights and interests, 10, 22, 79, 122, 190, 256, 257
- women's roles. *See* Roles
- Women's Rights at Work, 84
- Women's self-efficacy, 5, 195, 250, 276
- Women's status, social status, 10, 18–21, 30, 31, 71, 88
- women hold up half the sky, 17, 72, 253, 255
- Women's studies, 210
- Women worker's rights, 77
- Work and family, 23, 30, 49, 51, 150, 235
- Working mothers, 21, 41, 93, 95–97, 99, 235, 237
- Working women, 40, 53, 95, 98, 99, 103, 295
- Work-life balance, 27, 28, 41, 95, 103, 193, 195, 196, 221, 264
- Workplace, 9, 25, 29, 40, 84, 91, 93, 97, 102, 103, 116, 123, 124, 130, 190, 194, 195, 209, 210, 215, 217, 219, 236, 241, 264, 266, 267, 276, 287, 295

World Economic Forum (WEF), [2](#), [3](#),
[12](#), [18](#), [24](#), [28](#), [37](#), [39](#), [41](#), [50](#),
[83](#), [84](#), [87](#), [88](#), [95](#), [97](#), [98](#), [103](#),
[104](#), [127](#), [129](#), [203](#), [208](#), [228](#),
[248](#), [250](#), [252](#), [258](#), [259](#), [261](#),
[262](#), [266](#), [268–272](#)
Wu Lun, [41](#), [51](#)

Y

Yang, Yin, Yin and Yang, Yin-yang,
[19](#), [51](#), [254](#)

Z

Zhang, Guimei, [152–154](#)