

# Women in China since 1995:

*A Reader of Collection of Women's Studies*

《妇女研究论丛》英文集粹

Edited by Tan Lin (谭琳) and Chen Lanyan (陈澜燕)

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## 《妇女研究论丛》英文集粹

**Women in China since 1995: A Reader of *Collection of Women's Studies***

谭琳 陈澜燕 主编

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# Introduction (概述)

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Tan Lin and Chen Lanyan

This reader includes twenty articles and research reports that embody the most significant opinions, reflections, and research on women's development and gender equality published in *Collection of Women's Studies*, the flagship journal of gender and women's studies in China. The translated articles and reports selected here represent an unprecedented undertaking of the history of Chinese gender and women's studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of academic development of the discipline and its priority research concerns, including its close ties to public policy. Moreover, this selection of works endeavours to introduce to an international audience the changes that have taken place in the field as researchers strive to draw attention to the realities of Chinese women's situation and their efforts to move towards emancipation and equality. The pursuit of equality is a central theme of the theoretical framework constructed in this reader. In what follows we offer a background and an account of the selected articles and research reports as well as the editors' acknowledgements.

## Making Gender Equality a True Core Socialist Value: The Chinese Women's Research Society (CWRS) and *Collection of Women's Studies*

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Chinese Women's Research Society (CWRS) was founded in December, 1999 to muster the scholarship and activism then burgeoning across the country, and develop gender and women's studies. The journal, *Collection of Women's Studies*, first set up in 1992 by the Women's Studies Institute of China (WSIC) under the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), became the official publication of the

CWRS in January, 2001. The journal has since expanded its reach through the CWRS's 110 member organizations, and 216 member councilors who are distinguished researchers from universities and social sciences academies, to Women's Federations and the system of Party Schools of the Communist Party of China. Some of these member councilors serve on the journal's 26 member editorial board while others on the board come from WSIC and universities from Hong Kong, Canada, and the USA. The journal is gaining greater recognition in both China and overseas in terms of its ranking amongst leading Chinese journals, its citation rate and impact factor. According to the latest statistics of the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database published by [www.cnki.net](http://www.cnki.net) in 2013, *Collection of Women's Studies* had 5,068 institutional subscribers located in 23 countries and regions and individual subscribers in 20 countries and regions. This is largely because of its dedicated task of making women's studies relevant to the women's movements in China, promoting both political and public will for women's development and gender equality; its commitment to nurture new theoretical frameworks and methodologies appropriate to the advancement of women's studies; and its commanding depiction of academic research on women's development in China.

One of the main focuses over *Collection of Women's Studies* history has been the search for a socialist feminist perspective that would establish gender equality as a central component in the core values of socialism, which the Chinese people and government have committed to achieve in recent decades through their efforts to combine state planning with globalized markets. This search for a "socialist feminism that fits the Chinese context" is part of an unprecedented historical effort to pursue "socialism with Chinese characteristics," on the basis of a theory that guides the way to a socialist system that is ultimately distinguished by its core values<sup>①</sup>.

A theoretical and methodological perspective that charts the path of Chinese women toward equality guides the re-publication of the articles and research reports offered here. This path is informed by the interactive and changing relationship that exists between, on the one hand, the pursuit of gender equality as a key component of the core values of socialism that the Chinese are attempting to

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① Gu Xiulian. Work Report at the Third Assembly of the CWRS[Z]. 2010.

achieve, and on the other hand, the international standard of gender equality promoted by the goals adopted during and after the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Any account of this relationship, therefore, must be placed in the historical context of, first, the Chinese socialist experiment and, second, the development of a market-based economy in China.

Late Chairman Mao Zedong's famous pronouncement in 1953 that women "could hold up half the sky," which paved the way for the government of the newly founded People's Republic to access the strengths and talents of the female population and laid the foundation for a state principle policy of "equality between men and women" (see article by Zhang Yongying, Li Yani and Li Haiyan). In 1995, the then president of China, Jiang Zemin, officially proclaimed this policy during the Fourth World Conference on Women, grounding it within a principle of "equal pay for equal work" (see Jiang Xiuhua's article). Making gender equality one of the core socialist values, women's studies researchers in China seek not only to map Chinese women's historical movements toward advancement and liberation throughout the Chinese socialist experiment but also to define the central tasks involved in advancing the movement today, including identifying, (a) the driving forces of that advancement, and (b) the conditions within which these driving forces operate. While research on the history of Chinese women's movements endorses the socialist path whereby women have made progress in leaps and bounds over the past hundred years, it also reveals that Chinese people are only in the early stages of building socialism given the challenges women still face and the inequalities that continue to exist.<sup>①</sup> Understanding these challenges and developing strategies to combat the unequal conditions that continue to occur at this critical juncture of women's development (thanks to China's transition to a market-based economy driven by economic reform policies since the 1980s), occupy researchers' attention. Equally urgent, perplexing, and significant, is how to bring together the "Half the Sky" perspective of equality with a socialist feminist perspective that would help to guide the development of strategies to overcome unequal conditions created by the policies that charted the economic reforms in the first place.

Like their counterparts around the world, Chinese researchers have discov-

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① Chen Zhili. Work Report at the Fourth Assembly of the CWRS[Z]. 2015.

ered since the Fourth World Conference on Women that gender can provide an important analytical tool for understanding women's diverse and specific realities. This understanding adds a new dimension to women's pursuit of equality as they recognize that they not only face different realities from men but are also diversified in different groups and have specific needs (see article by Chen Lanyan).<sup>①</sup> Nationwide surveys on the status of Chinese women conducted in 1990, 2000 and 2010, as well as more specific studies, have allowed researchers to track changes in the lives of different women's groups, including rural women, migrant women, women workers, minority women, women with disabilities, professional women, university women graduates, elderly women, and girls. They found that different groups face specific issues, some of which are life-threatening, such as poverty and stigma related to diseases, including HIV/AIDS, abuse and loss of land, jobs, and other means of livelihood, while others affect employment and careers, such as discriminatory standards in recruitment and retirement, deprivation of benefits and social protection, and sexual harassment. All women struggle against growing gender-based inequalities, and risk subordination and violence under patriarchal structures. This reader, for example, contains articles examining discriminatory conditions faced by women in university faculties (see article by Wang Jun), and those faced by women scientists in their career development (see article by Song Lin). Also in this reader, Liu Bohong, Guo Li, and Hao Rui contest policies that require women to retire earlier than men (age 55 for female professionals versus 60 for men, and 50 for female workers versus 55 for men), policies that were adopted in response to concerns for gender differences. Similarly, Song Shaopeng challenges the societal pressure, which started to build in China in the 1990s, demanding that women should pursue roles more appropriate to their gender, namely as homemakers, and that they should "go home," vacate jobs, and help reduce the pressure of unemployment.

Understanding these and other gender-based differences and challenges has helped to illustrate the worsening conditions that women face compared with men under China's marketization and globalization. It also helps to identify the driving forces of women's advancement once Chinese women are propelled to speak with an organized voice, act on their awareness of realities and the issues that imperil

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<sup>①</sup> Chen Lanyan. *Gender and Chinese Development: Towards an Equitable Society*[M]. London: Routledge, 2008.

their lives, and influence the policies to effect change. For example, articles included in this reader on the organization of women in the recovery of an earthquake-affected community (see article by Pei Yuxin), and in the development of a tourism industry in a minority community (see article by Zhao Qiaoyan), provide valuable examples where patriarchal communities gave way to the organized voices of rural and minority women, so much so that the latter gained independence, status, and happiness. The article by Guo Xiajuan and Lü Xiaomin on experiments with participatory gender budgets in rural townships sheds light on how local women's organizations are taking the initiative to promote the democratic practice of deliberating publicly local budgets so as to encourage balanced development and protection of women's rights. Wang Shizhou, Xia Yinlan, Chen Mingxia, Li Mingshun, Xue Ninglan, and Xiao Jianguo provide, in their separate contributions, expert analysis of why the adoption of a national law against domestic and sexual violence, which indiscriminately threatens the lives of women and girls, is urgently needed and necessary in order to protect women's universal right to dignity. An important effect of these intellectual efforts is to highlight the importance of women's organizations as vehicles for providing the necessary conditions for women and their families to gain access to welfare and achieve their potential and happiness by effecting changes in policies at the different levels of government.

Member researchers of the CWRS have been developing strategies, including expanding institutional research and academic capabilities to deepen their knowledge of the unequal and disparate realities women face, disseminating research findings so as to raise awareness of inequalities, and applying research to policy advocacy in order to effect policy changes.<sup>①</sup> Such strategies resonate with researchers in other countries, including Western, English-speaking countries like Canada, the UK, and the USA, who have also raised questions about gender-based differences and experiences with inequality. What distinguishes Chinese researchers' work from that of their counterparts in other countries, however, is their search for a socialist feminist perspective that would speak to the realities of Chinese women and guide their demands for policy changes to achieve equality.

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① Peng Peiyun. Seizing Historical Opportunities in Promoting the Development of Women's Studies: Work Report at the Second CWRS Assembly[Z]. Adopted by the Standing Committee of the CWRS on December 14, 2004.



ty. This Chinese socialist feminism, though it has its roots in the “Half the Sky” perspective on equality, has benefited from intellectual debates and feminist scholarship in the international community so as to enrich its theoretical underpinnings at three crucial points: (a) the use of gender analysis; (b) a concise and democratic understanding of the political economy of policy-making; and (c) the adoption of foundations of gender equality that would serve as bases for Chinese women’s movements to press for changes that overcome inequalities and establish core socialist values.

Just as CWRS researchers are making headway in acquiring a socialist feminist perspective, the feminist researchers in other countries, including Western, English-speaking countries such as Canada, the UK, and the USA, are joining forces with other progressive movements, from climate change activists to anti-poverty campaigners. To nurture a vision of a better future, as CWRS researchers are doing, researchers in other countries may find such endeavours interesting as points of comparison with their own work. Such a dialogue between researchers in China and their overseas counterparts in fact began during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, and the synergies and collaborations inspired by this and subsequent meetings are reflected from a Chinese perspective in the articles by Xiao Yang, Jiang Xiuhua, Zhang Yongying et al., and others. As editors, we hope this reader will encourage further dialogue and collaboration throughout the world, based especially on the shared concerns and challenges regarding persisting impediments to the advancement of equality, and in ways that will promote transnational women’s movements. It, more importantly, reaches out to overseas researchers and concerned individuals interested in the issues that have stalled the progress of Chinese women in order to seek potential common ground that will expand a discourse on the path to equality.

## Selected Articles and Research Reports

The twenty articles and research reports that appear here were all published in different issues of *Collection of Women's Studies* between 2011 and 2012, and can be broadly regarded as representative of work in the following areas. First, research on the current conditions of Chinese women as a whole and on specific groups of women, for example, “The Third National Survey on Chinese Women’s

Status; Key Data Report” prepared by the Research Team that participated in the design and management of the survey, Wang Jun’s case studies and qualitative analysis of the conditions of women in higher education, and Song Lin and the ACWF Research Team’s work on challenges to women’s advancement in science and technology. Women in these latter two fields have long been understudied in China, and the selected research reports identify gender-based discrimination as a factor in women’s disadvantaged positions, especially their extremely low representation on the research councils and committees that decide on grants in higher education and in science and technology. The report on the findings of the Third National Survey on Chinese Women’s Status shows that there has been uneven progress for women in China in education, access to health care, and health outcomes compared to findings from a decade ago. Prejudice and gender-based discrimination continue to impede progress in women’s employment and political participation, particularly affecting the lives of women in vulnerable circumstances, for example, in the countryside, amongst minorities, and for people living with disabilities, including age and chronic diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Second, selected articles and research reports focus on specific issues, for instance, women and health (see article by Lin Xiaoshan), women’s early retirement (see article by Liu Bohong, Guo Li and Hao Rui), the “going home” controversy (see article by Song Shaopeng), the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth (see article by Li Huiying; Yang Juhua), and women’s political participation (see article by Min Dongchao). All these studies have policy implications, and in fact, most authors directly or indirectly refer to current policies and consider potential alternatives. Even while examining the different factors and sides of the issue, the authors also clearly reflect on important theoretical considerations, bringing together current thinking and debates on the challenges women face.

Such theoretical reflections continue in articles that consider the historical significance of the journal itself, its trailblazing engagement with women’s and gender studies in China over the past twenty years (see article by Jiang Xiuhua), and the important role that representatives of CWRs researchers in various fields took in the discussion and implementation of the Beijing goals during the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 2010 (see article by Zhang Yongying, et al. ). The two articles here provide perspective on the development of women’s and gender studies in China, especially the important

changes that have taken place in this academic field. As is clear from these articles, women's and gender studies in China has grown as a result of close links with policy analysis and through intellectual exchanges with overseas scholars and researchers on issues of common concern.

One of the most important issues forms the third area of research interest represented here—an approach to gender equality that emphasizes women's organization, and how changing attitudes and policy reflect the ways individuals intersect with family and community in a rapidly urbanizing and globalizing China. For example, Zuo Jiping examines the complex and uneven influence of family patriarchy on the role of women at home and in society from different generations, especially mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. These changes are observed in the rise in status of daughters-in-law, and the likely corresponding decline in status of mothers-in-law in families and communities, stemming from transformations in the traditionally patrilocal Chinese family that originated in the construction of socialist egalitarian values in the 1950s and were further influenced by the later introduction of market economy in the 1980s. Zhang Chuanhong and Li Xiaoyun, moreover, examine the changes that occur in gender relationships and attitudes among migrant families as they embark on new lives after moving from rural areas to urban settings where they frequently develop new gender-based divisions of labour that have the potential to open opportunities for women to increase their status in resource allocation and decision-making within the family.

Finally, discussions on policy development, especially in relation to promoting equality and ending the discrimination and sexual violence women and girls often face at home and in society form the fourth area of concentration. This group of articles addresses current discussions and debates on the adoption of policies to stop the commercial sex trade of underage girls (see article by Zhao Hejun) and legislation against domestic violence (see article by Wang Shizhou; Xia Yinlan; Chen Mingxia; Li Mingshun; Xue Ninglan; and Xiao Jianguo). These articles by gender and legal experts generally begin from a legal and sociological perspective to engage in a direct dialogue with the existing policies (for example, the Criminal Law in Zhao Hejun's article, and a draft law on the prevention of domestic violence under review by the Chinese Legislature, the National People's Congress, in other articles). As a result, these essays contribute to the current thinking and policy on the promotion of gender equality, and reflect on the on-go-

ing efforts to achieve equitable protection of women's sexual and reproductive rights (as is the case in many other parts of the world) through the institution of appropriate definitions of gender-based violence as well as effective strategies to protect affected women and children.

This reader is a collaborative effort of the WSIC, the leading think tank of women's research in China, which houses the secretariat of the CWRS and publishes *Collection of Women's Studies*, and the various contributors/researchers and their translators. Though we as editors live and work in different countries, we together have years of experience and involvement with *Collection of Women's Studies*. Tan Lin has been the Director of the Editorial Board since 2003, and Chen Lanyan, who is an associate professor of Social Welfare and Social Development at Nipissing University in Canada, has extensive experience with research on Chinese women's issues and has been a member of the Editorial Board since 2007. We are mere facilitators of this collaborative effort, however. We would like to acknowledge the important contributions each author has made to this reader. Many, especially the members of the Editorial Office of *Collection of Women's Studies*, have also worked enthusiastically behind the scenes. Our ability to work and the quality of our work are inseparably linked to the social and personal worlds in which we live. We would like to extend our gratitude to Du Jie, Xiao Yang, Jiang Xiuhua, Mi Ruixin, Yang Yujing, Shi Kailiang, and Wang Qinghong. Chen Lanyan is pleased that her sabbatical leave coincided in time with this project, and would like to thank colleagues, friends and families for their support, in particular, Peter Forster, Miao Chen, Rick Vanderlee and Timothy Pearson.

This ground-breaking book would not have been possible without the involvement of our outstanding publisher and the talented editor and staff who have all contributed to making this publication a reality.

September 24, 2015

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# **The Third National Survey on Chinese Women's Status: Key Data Report\***

**Research Team of the Third National Survey on Chinese Women's Status\*\***

**Trans. Wang Guoyuan\*\*\***

On December 1, 2010, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) jointly organized and implemented the Third National Survey on Chinese Women's Status. The data collection and collation has basically been concluded and so this report intends to introduce the details of the survey and presents the results of the preliminary analysis of the significant data. This report summarizes the eight major achievements made in improving the status of Chinese women and the challenges faced in six areas over the first decade of the 21st century. It also suggests related measures to address the challenges.

## **Survey Design, Organization, and Implementation**

### ***Objectives of the Survey***

The Third National Survey on Chinese Women's Status was jointly organized by the All-China Women's Federation and the National Bureau of Statistics after the First in 1990 and the Second in 2000. The objectives of this survey were to:

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\* This Project is a National Social Science Fund Major Project. Project Leader: Song Xiuyan. Project Name: "Survey and Research on Chinese Women's Social Status in the New Era;" Project Number: 10 @ ZH020. This Report presents the preliminary findings of this Project.

\*\* Members of the report writing group: Zhen Yan, Tan Lin, Jiang Yongping, Jia Yunzhu, Yang Hui, He Jianhua, Yang Yujing, Jiang Xiuhua, Shi Kailiang, Huang Guixia, Zhang Yongying, Li Yani, Li Xianling, Li Wen, Shi Tong, Li Jie, Tong Xin, Ma Dongling, Zheng Zhenzhen, Niu Jianlin.

\*\*\* Wang Guoyuan, M. A. Candidate of School of English and International Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

(1) comprehensively and objectively reflect the current situations and issues in gender equality and women's development in China as well as the progress made in both of these areas; (2) analyze the factors and mechanisms that influence the status of women, study the relationship between changes in social structure and those in women's status, and provide a scientific basis for the Party and the government to adopt guidelines, policies, and programs of action to promote women's development and gender equality; (3) advance all levels of Women's Federations' understanding of the demand of the different women groups in order for their work on women's affairs to be more based on evidence; and (4) expand on socialist women's theory with Chinese characteristics and policy studies.

### ***Organization, Leadership, and Survey Implementation***

To ensure smooth implementation, relevant leaders of the All-China Women's Federation and the National Bureau of Statistics, which jointly organized the Survey, formed a Steering Committee. Chen Zhili, vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China and President of the All-China Women's Federation became the advisor. Song Xiuyan, vice Chairman and First Secretary of the Secretariat of the All-China Women's Federation headed the Steering Committee. The Women's Studies Institute of China under the All-China Women's Federation carried out the research under the Office of the Steering Committee of the project. The Institute was in charge of the survey design; sample selection; the training of survey instructors and interviewers; organization, coordination, and quality control of household surveys; and data entry, computation and analysis. The Women's Federations based in the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities were responsible for recruiting the survey instructors and interviewers and implementing the household surveys within their borders.

### ***Basic Concepts and Main Contents***

In this survey, "the status of women" referred to the rights, resources, and responsibilities that different groups of women have in their relationships and social life compared with men, as well as the extent to which society recognizes the role of women. This survey covered nine aspects: (1) Health; (2) Education; (3) Economic Status; (4) Social Security; (5) Politics; (6) Marital and Family



Status; (7) Lifestyle; (8) Legal Rights and Legal Awareness; and (9) Gender-Based Perceptions and Attitudes.

### ***Target Population and Questionnaires***

In this survey, the basic unit of data collection and analysis was individuals and communities. Questionnaires were therefore divided into personal and community (villagers' and neighborhood committees) questionnaires.

The personal questionnaires were targeted at both female and male mainland Chinese citizens between the ages of 18 and 64 who lived in a family unit on December 1, 2010. To obtain an in-depth analysis of the changes in the status of different groups of women, this survey included 5 typical population groups: children, senior citizens, college students, people affected by migration, and high-level professionals. The children surveyed were randomly selected between the ages of 10 and 17 who lived with the families interviewed. The senior citizens surveyed were drawn from those aged 65 and over. College students surveyed were chosen from undergraduate and graduate students in institutions of higher learning. Apart from the household samples, the survey also gathered additional information from people affected by migration as well as from high-level professionals. The targets of the community surveys were villagers' and neighborhood committees.

### ***Sampling and Results of Questionnaires***

Sampling was used in the survey to collect data as the basis for both national and provincial-level analyses. The sampling method included a fundamental scheme based on inferences drawn from nationally representative samples, and a complementary scheme based on inferences drawn from provincial-level representative samples. The two schemes used the same sampling method.

The sampling design of this survey was meant to be scientific, efficient, and practical. A three-stage stratified sampling design with unequal probabilities (PPS) was adopted, and the stratification was based on the level of regional development. The first-stage units were counties, municipal districts, and county-level municipalities (the first-stage units in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai were rural townships, towns, and urban streets). 460 primary sampling units were se-