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Chinese People's Perceptions of Gender Inequality

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Abstract

Purpose – *The aim of the study is to examine young urban Chinese people's perceptions of gender inequality, including their awareness, beliefs, values, understanding, and their perceptions of the reality. The main fields investigated by the research are: family (childcare, housework, financial responsibility and women's unpaid work); work (sex segregation in the workplace, low-paid work, women's service occupations and gender wage gap,); political participation and representation; legal rights and measures; reproductive and sexual autonomy; gender awareness; and understanding of feminism.*

Theory – *Individualistic, cultural, and social explanations of gender inequality constitute the theoretical framework for the analysis. The construction of the questionnaire/interview questions is based on feminist theories including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, and socialist feminism.*

Method – *A mixed method approach is employed for the research. Both quantitative and qualitative data are obtained in the field by means of questionnaire and interview. The sample is made up of 118 young Chinese people living in the city of Harbin, including 49 men and 69 women.*

Limitations – *Areas such as women's health, sexual violence and abuse, and education are not included in the study. The sample has certain bias due to contextual constraints, limiting the validity for generalization.*

Keywords: *Gender inequality, Perceptions, China, Feminism, Cultural traditions*

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Research Question	5
2. Literature Review	5
3. Theory	10
3.1 Individualistic Explanation	10
3.2 Cultural and Social Explanations	11
3.3 Feminist Theories	12
<i>Liberal feminism</i>	13
<i>Marxist feminism</i>	13
<i>Socialist feminism</i>	13
4. Methods	14
4.1 Sampling Method	14
4.2 Research Site	14
4.3 Questionnaire	15
4.4 Interview	18
4.5 Combination of Two Methods	19
5. Results and Discussion	21
5.1 Sample Description	21
5.2 Findings	22
5.2.1 “Women and men should be equal”	22
5.2.2 “Women and men are equally treated in the society”	24
5.2.3 “I feel equally treated”	25
5.2.4 Family	26
<i>Childcare</i>	26
<i>Housework</i>	27
<i>Financial responsibility</i>	28
<i>Women’s work for the family</i>	29

5.2.5 Work	30
<i>Certain jobs more suitable for men</i>	30
<i>Unequal opportunities in the workplace</i>	30
<i>Low-paid work</i>	31
<i>Women’s service occupations</i>	32
<i>Unequal pay</i>	33
5.2.6 Political Participation	33
5.2.7 Legal Rights and Legal Measures	34
5.2.8 Reproductive and Sexual Autonomy	34
5.2.9 Increasing or Decreasing Gender Inequality?	35
5.2.10 Knowledge and Attention	36
5.2.11 What Is Feminism	37
<i>Men’s answers</i>	38
<i>Women’s answers</i>	40
 6. Conclusions	 43
 7. Appendices	 45
 8. References	 49

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender has become an increasingly important concept in development studies. Gender equality matters for development, both instrumentally and intrinsically. From an economic perspective, gender equality is conducive to economic growth, poverty reduction, and a better quality of life (World Bank 2000). Misallocating women's skills and talent comes at a high economic cost (World Bank 2011). However, the wellbeing and equality of women is not just an instrument for development. Women's equal rights are part of basic human rights. Gender issues are present in all spheres of development. Gender equality is a goal in itself.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2012, China is ranked the 69th among 135 countries: the 58th on economic participation and opportunity, the 85th on educational attainment, the 58th on political empowerment, and the 132nd on health and survival which is the fourth lowest ranked country on this sub-index. Compared to last year, China's position has slipped due to an increase in the perceived gender wage gap (WEF 2012: 27). The low rank on health and survival is the result of a disproportionate sex ratio at birth (ibid). China's male/female ratio at birth is ranked the 1st in the world according to both the CIA and the World Data Bank estimates (The World Factbook 2012). The abnormal phenomenon of higher female infant mortality rate than male is attributed to sex-selective abortion and infanticide, owing to a strong preference for sons in China. The high male/female ratio has a negative social impact, especially upon Chinese men who cannot find partners.

In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) brought equal legal rights to Chinese women. Legal protection for women ensures equal rights for both women and men in access to employment, equal pay, compulsory education, political participation, property, marriage and health (World Bank 2000). Tremendous improvements have been made and Chinese women's status has been significantly raised since the Mao era. However, the transition from a state to a market economy has brought back some backward gender practices (ibid). Gender-based crimes such as trafficking in women, prostitution, and female infanticide have reappeared and grown in the past years (World Bank 2002: 30). Deeply entrenched influence of Confucian cultural values and traditional patriarchal ideology persists in China. The transform of traditional gender attitudes and expectations of traditional gender roles is a long and difficult process.

Lots of research has focused on the reality side of gender inequality in China, but very little has been done on the perception aspect. This study attempts to fill this gap. Unequal gender practice can be captured in figures and indices, but it derives from people's mind. Gender discrimination is exercised through people's acts in daily life. Social perception has automatic effects on social behavior (Dijksterhuis & Bargh 2001). Besides, popular views shape perceptions of the legitimacy of public policy and may thereby either facilitate or hinder their implementation (Eisinga et al. 1999: 232). Public beliefs about gender have important implications for future planning and implementation of policies, strategies and projects aiming at eliminating gender inequality. Thus the examination of Chinese people's gender perceptions is crucial for not only understanding gender inequality, but also changing gender inequality in China.

The aim of this study is to investigate young urban Chinese people's perceptions of gender inequality, including their awareness, attitudes, beliefs, values, understanding, as well as their perceptions of the reality. Gender inequality manifests itself in various domains. Due to the scope of the thesis, the research aims to mainly examine the following dimensions: family (unequal responsibilities in terms of childcare, housework, and finances); work (unequal employment opportunities, women's service occupations, and

unequal pay for comparable work); political participation and representation; legal rights and legal measures; reproductive and sexual autonomy.

1.1 Research Question

How do young Chinese people living in the city of Harbin perceive gender inequality?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The World Bank has published several detailed reports on China in regard to gender. Key challenges to gender equality in China are identified as follows (World Bank 2002):

- Increasing gender inequality in employment
- Relative poverty of women becoming more serious
- Gender inequality of education opportunities brought by the “marketization” of education
- The side-effects of “marketization” of health care and family planning
- Lower social status increases the vulnerability of women and girls
- Little progress has been made in the participation of women in the decision-making process

With the current challenges in mind, below I will review the literature on gender inequality in China and perceptions of gender inequality, with focus on areas that are examined in my empirical research.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in China carried out comprehensive nationwide research and published the report in 2004 – “Women and Men in China: Facts and Figures”, which offers a great amount of empirical data on gender issues. Survey on the Social Status of Chinese Women in 2000 provided data on women and men’s time use in housework and other major activities, and the results demonstrated big time-use differences between women and men (NBS 2004: 103-105). Within 85% of families, wives play the major role in cooking, cleaning, laundry and other household chores (ibid). In urban areas, women generally spend 2 hours more than men on household duties every day (with women 3h34m and men 1h26m); women use less time for study than men do (with women 29 minutes daily and men 40 minutes); in terms of leisure, women on average spend less time watching TV and doing other free-time activities than men do (with 19 minutes gender gap daily) (ibid).

Lots of research has confirmed the gender gap in time use of paid and unpaid labor (Minguez 2012). Through interviews with 30 working-class cohabiting couples, Miller and Sassler’s study concludes that traditional gendered division of labor and institutionalized gender roles remain deeply entrenched among couples despite more supportive attitudes towards working women (2012). Traditional role expectations are reflected in that many people still believe that men are primarily responsible for providing for the family and men generally assign precedence to their career goals over their partners’ (Gerson 2009; Orrange 2002). Women, on the other hand, continue to perform the majority of housework; even when they believe in equal sharing, the husbands mostly give lip-service but remain largely uninvolved in domestic labor (Miller & Sassler 2012: 428-429).

On the other hand, Greenstein’s research on gender ideology and perceptions of the fairness of the division of household labor has shown that although married women perform the majority of housework, relatively

few wives feel that this arrangement is unfair (1996: 1029). Zuo and Bian's study which investigates how Chinese couples perceive fairness of the wife's disproportionately heavy household responsibility, using data from in-depth interview with 39 married couples in Beijing, also reaches the same finding – the majority of wives and husbands see it as fair (2001: 1122). Their research results confirm people's expectations of traditional gender roles (ibid):

“...husband's breadwinner role and wife's housekeeper role retain their primary place in the family and that gender-role expectations produce gendered resources to both wives and husbands. These expectations release both the husbands, who have fulfilled the provider role, from the obligation to share housework equally, and the wives, who combine paid and domestic work, from an equal responsibility of breadwinning. Therefore, the failure to bring adequate gendered resources to a marriage, rather than the unequal distribution of housework, causes a sense of unfairness.”

In other words, women do not perceive bearing more housework responsibility as unfair because men bear more financial responsibility for the family.

Besides domestic labor, traditional gender norms are also entrenched in many other fields. Post-1949 China has largely promoted gender equality through legislative measures, but these laws alone cannot erase social norms. These new gender laws are thinly rooted while traditional gender stratification is deeply embedded in the society (World Bank 2000: 7). Despite the efforts to disseminate the laws by the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), many are still unaware of their rights, especially poor, rural, uneducated, or illiterate women (World Bank 2000: 8). Crimes including female infanticide and trafficking in women still happen in today's China.

Chinese women's relatively low influence and power in the political arena is another manifestation of gender inequality. Due to China's political sensitivity, transparent data are not available for research. The proportion of female occupied seats in national parliaments is often used to indicate the level of women's political participation. Since the fourth National People's Congress (NPC), the percentage of female among total deputies has always been higher than 20%, being 21.3% in 2008 at the eleventh NPC (NBS 2005; People's Daily 2008). The high percentage seems impressive and the CCP is fond of pointing to women's representation in the NPC to demonstrate its success in promoting gender equality (Su 2006: 161). But it is argued that this number can be misleading in the Chinese political context, because it does not gauge gender equality in the real center of political power – leadership positions in the Party-State (ibid). Having examined decision makers at the provincial level, Su points out the fact that only 10% of provincial elite are female and they have extremely low chances of reaching a chief leadership position (ibid). Besides, participation does not correlate directly to influential power. A closer look at how much power women possess in Chinese politics compared to men reveals high barriers for women in political institutions and leads to a less sanguine picture about gender equality in China.

Work-related gender inequality has attracted lots of attention in the academia. Gender inequality in the workplace mainly takes two forms: 1) unequal pay, and 2) unequal employment probability.

Research mostly finds that gender wage gap has increased since economic reforms (Liu 2011: 839). A study by Zhang et al. (2008) using urban household survey data shows that the gender earnings gap has been increasing from 14.7% in 1988 to 22.6% in 1995 to 27.2% in 2004. A more recent study by Li et al. (2011) using data from the 1995, 2002 and 2007 surveys also shows that the gender wage gap has widened significantly, particularly in the period 2002-2007, and that the gap is greater for low wage groups, implying rising discrimination against female employees in China's urban labor market. Another study by Liu (2011) presents a different finding that the gender earnings gap has stabilized after 1997 due to a rise in the

relative education level of employed women, which is the result of a higher exit rate from employment of less educated women.

On the other hand, Lam's research (2004) through interviews with 28 contemporary Hong Kong middle-class educated women in their 20s has found that the gender gap in income is rarely identified as a type of inequality that arouses discontent, which exposes the structural barriers that prevent people from perceiving and hence resenting inequalities.

Women are also at a disadvantaged status in terms of employment, with higher unemployment rates and earlier and faster pace of leaving their jobs than men (World Bank 2006). In the province of Heilongjiang in China (where the research site is located), the employment rates in 2000 were 83.06% for men and 61.48% for women (World Bank 2006: 30-31).

Sex segregation in the workplace (job segregation by sex) is a principal source of gender inequality in the labor market. Lam's empirical research also demonstrates that all the respondents identified the exclusion of females from equal opportunities in joining industries or companies, or in getting promotion, as a type of gender inequality prevailing in society (2004: 10). Another study examining promotion opportunities in Shanghai and Guangzhou found promotion advantages for men in both cities (Cao 2001). As argued by Bielby and Baron (1986), some employers reserve some jobs for men and others for women, based on perceptions of group differences between the sexes. Once the perception norm of gendered division of labor is established, it becomes taken for granted, sustained over the years unless some deliberate effort is taken to undo it (Guo 2006: 5).

Exploring people's perceptions of gender inequality, one interesting and important finding is that in developing countries where gender gaps are bigger, people on the contrary perceive less inequality and see gender inequality as less unjust/unfair (Horowitz & Wike 2010; Kinias & Kim 2011).

One possible explanation is that in more gender-equal countries, well-established consensus on gender equality has led to higher expectations and higher bar; whereas in developing countries with lower objective status of gender equality, people have a more conditional definition (Horowitz & Wike 2010: 66). Kinias and Kim's study (2011), using cross-cultural comparisons, shows that Hong Kong Chinese women see gender inequality as less unjust/unfair and they value gender inequality less than European American women. They point out the cultural influences on interpretations of gender equality and confirm the cultural differences in people's attitudes toward gender equality. Gender inequality is not as upsetting for East Asian women as it is for Western women since Confucian culture values equality less. Therefore, there is less need for justification for inequality when equality is objectively low than when equality is objectively high (Kinias & Kim 2011: 92).

Concerning the issue of recognizing gender inequality, another study by Morrison et al. (2005) provides a somewhat contrasting finding. Through examination of perceptions of gender inequality by undergraduates at a British University, they find that although gender inequality exists in the institutional setting, students, especially female students, are reluctant to recognize or articulate it as discrimination. Instead, there is a tendency to downplay or deny such inequalities, making it more difficult to identify and address gender problems (Morrison et al. 2005: 161). They further suggest that this may be a 'coping strategy' in gender-biased institutions, and also a symptom of a 'post-feminist' academic environment, where gender inequality is supposed to be a thing of the past (ibid).

Research that investigates people's perception, identification, acquiescence or resentment of gender inequality has presented mixed findings because of the many complicated factors involved in each research context, including cultural, academic, social, institutional, educational, ideological, and etc.

Finally, the Pew Global Attitudes Project provides a large database on public perceptions. In 2010, Pew Research Center carried out a 22-nation Pew Global Attitudes survey which covers numerous multidimensional issues. The survey includes 155 questions, among which eight are gender-related and have been implemented in China. Face-to-face interviews with 3,262 Chinese adults were conducted (1,655 women and 1,607 men). As noted, the sample is disproportionately urban in China's case (Pew Research Center 2010: 19). Below I will present the selection of gender-related survey questions and results for China.

Q6 All things considered, who has a better life in this country -- men or women?						
China (spring, 2010)	Men	Women	Same	DK/Refused	Total	
	22	24	49	6	100	
Q33 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree?						
China (spring, 2010)	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	DK/refused	Total
	12	36	33	17	2	100
Q47 Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement. Men get more opportunities than women for jobs that pay well, even when women are as qualified as men for the job.						
China (spring, 2010)	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	DK/refused	Total
	20	53	20	5	2	100
Q69b Please tell me whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with the following statements: b. Women should be able to work outside the home						
China (spring, 2010)	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	DK/refused	Total
	42	55	2	1	0	100
Q69c Please tell me whether you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with the following statements: c. When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women						
China (spring, 2010)	Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree	DK/refused	Total
	28	45	20	6	1	100
Q80 On a different subject, do you think women should have equal rights with men, or shouldn't they?						
China (spring, 2010)	Yes, should	No, should not	DK/Refused		Total	
	95	3	2		100	

Q81 ASK IF THINKS WOMEN SHOULD HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS: China has made most of the changes needed to give women equal rights with men OR China needs to continue making changes to give women equal rights with men?					
China (spring, 2010)	China has made most of the changes needed	China needs to continue making changes	DK/Refused	Total	N
	53	46	1	100	3099
Q93 What kind of marriage do you think is the more satisfying way of life: one where the husband provides for the family and the wife takes care of the house and children or one where both have jobs and both take care of the house and children?					
		Husband provides	Both provide	DK/Refused	Total
China	Spring, 2010	21	78	1	100
China	Summer, 2002	12	86	1	100

(The percentage numbers have been rounded.)

In summary, the survey results show that:

1. When considering whether men or women have a better life, there is not a gender gap in people's perceptions.
2. About half of the population disagree that university education is more important for a boy and half agree.
3. 73% of the people perceive unequal opportunities in the workplace.
4. 97% of the people think that women should be able to work outside home.
5. 73% of the people agree to men's more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce.
6. 95% of the people believe that women and men should have equal rights.
7. Slightly more than half of the people think that China has made most of the changes needed to give women equal rights with men and slightly less than half think more changes are needed.
8. Majority of the people believe in husband and wife both working and taking care of the house and children, but in comparison to 2002, there has been a rise in the percentage of people believing in only the husband providing for the family in 2010.

3. THEORY

A few ideologies underlie the theories explaining gender inequality, including supernatural, genetic, individualistic, cultural, and social explanations (Eisinga et al. 1999). The last three will be closely examined and discussed here as they form the theoretical framework for the analysis of Chinese people's gender perceptions.

3.1 Individualistic Explanation

Individualistic ideology emphasizes the choice-making capacities of individuals. The assumption is that people themselves are in charge of their own lives and what happens in the world is the aggregate result of personal initiative and individual willpower (Eisinga et al. 1999: 234). This ideology is primarily based on two beliefs: 1) the belief in the free choice of people with a free will; 2) the belief in a just world (ibid).

The belief in freedom to choose lies in the assumption that there are unlimited opportunities for social advancement and that everyone has the opportunity for climbing up the ladder of stratification of social status (ibid). Life is in the power of people and achievements only require lots of efforts.

The belief in a fair world is connected to the just world hypothesis that "people have a need to believe that their environment is a just and orderly place where people usually get what they deserve" (Lerner & Miller 1978: 1030). This ideology reinforces the notion of working hard and seizing opportunities in this stratified world. Thus individuals' variations alone account for the inequality in the society and the social constraints imposed by social structures are less blameworthy (Eisinga et al. 1999: 235 & 247).

Theories focusing on human capital are in conformity with this individualist ideology, for instance, neo-classical theories which argue that women rationally invest less in human capital and choose less desirable jobs that require less skill and commitment (Becker 1971; Mincer & Polachek 1974, in Guo 2006: 5).

Despite that the individualistic explanation of inequality is seemingly flawed and rarely employed or agreed in the academic world for feminists; this ideology is in fact the most common one in many parts of the world. As far as I know, this kind of value system is prevalent in China and also in USA. As a Chinese myself, I grew up in a society where this ideology is absolutely dominant. Ever since my childhood, everyone tells me that "as long as you work hard, you will succeed and get what you want". This mentality of Chinese people is certainly one of the underlying reasons of the phenomenon of "hard-working Chinese". The same applies to the famous "American dream" that is widespread and far-reaching in the hearts of American people. The notion of "you can achieve your dream as long as you work hard for it" is what Americans are proud of.

Hence, the individualistic ideology has crucial implications for the research on gender inequality in China because this ideology constitutes the foundation of Chinese people's thinking and perceptions.

3.2 Cultural and Social Explanations

The concept of gender is fundamental in any research on gender inequality. In the paper, I will apply the definition stated by Judith Lorber in her book "Gender inequality: feminist theories and politics" (2010: 15):

GENDER: A social status, a legal designation, and a personal identity. Through the social processes of gendering, gender divisions and their accompanying norms and role expectations are built into the major social institutions of society, such as the economy, the family, the state, culture, religion, and the law – the gendered social order. Woman and man, girl and boy are used when referring to gender.

There is a broad consensus among feminists that while sex is biological, gender is constructed culturally and socially. Men's dominance and women's subordination is a social creation, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman...; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature...which is described as feminine" (De Beauvoir 1953: 267).

People live in societies with specific cultural settings. Heritages of cultural values and customs persist in a way that hitherto affects the norms, ideologies and characteristics of a society. In the context of China, Confucianism has had huge influence throughout thousands of years of history and its values still have impacts on Chinese people's way of thinking despite the modernization and industrialization process.

Confucian traditions advocate the harmony of a society where people are assigned different roles and status within the social hierarchy and proper conduct is of importance. Society should be order in a hierarchical fashion with the ruler at the top and the youngest daughter at the bottom (Granrose 2007: 10). A woman's proper conduct is to behave according to the doctrine of "three obedience" which means that the duty as a woman is to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after her husband's death (ibid). This tradition has not completely vanished even today in contemporary China and more traditional families usually hold a weaker version of this perspective on women.

Another conspicuous ideology derived from Confucian traditions lies behind the common practice of men working outside home and women inside home. According to Confucius, the harmonious balance between yin (female) and yang (male) identifies the value of interdependence between women and men, but also allocates them with separate spheres of influence – men over the exterior world and women over the domestic world (Guisso 1982).

The Confucian tradition favors men over women since they are responsible for carrying on the family names. The Chinese culture has always accorded greater esteem, privileges, and status to men instead of women (Chan et al. 2011: 68). The expectation for a woman is to submerge her individuality to the family and the virtue of a woman is defined narrowly in her role as a wife and mother (ibid).

In sum, the cultural tradition of Confucianism in China has its emphasis on the harmonious maintenance of social hierarchy, rather than equality in the society (Kinias & Kim 2011: 91). The cultural history in China has tremendous influence in people's valuing and perceptions of gender equality. It also conditions the gender norms that guide people's values, expectations and ultimately constrain people's behavior.

Closely related to culture, theories of social construction of gender have been prevailing in feminist scholarship. Gender is increasingly seen as a social construct, embedded in the cultural, social, institutional dimensions of the society. The gender roles assigned to women and men are structurally and culturally

defined in ways which create, reinforce, and perpetuate relationships of male dominance and female subordination (Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui 2008: 2).

Social construction feminists recognize the gendered social order and the practices and processes of gendering in everyday life. They speak of “doing gender” and “degendering”. “A person’s gender is not simply an aspect of who one is, but more fundamentally it is something that one does, recurrently, in interaction with others”, as West and Zimmerman stated (1987: 126). Gender is produced and reproduced in everyday social conduct (Berkowitz et al. 2010: 133). Lorber offers a precise summary of this perspective (2010: 7):

“... gender inequality as embedded in the social construction and maintenance of the gendered social order through doing gender as individuals, in interaction, and as part of families, work organizations, and throughout cultural and knowledge productions.”

Besides the gendered culture, the institutions in societies are also gendered. They grant economic, political, social, and cultural advantages to men instead of women.

In a social constructionist perspective, every cultural and social setting has its own gender norms that indicate the appropriate behaviors for women and men (Pulerwitz & Barker 2008: 324). Gender is associated not only with sex, but also with the multidimensional expectations related to one’s sex. In the gendering process, people learn gender-appropriate behaviors according to culturally established gender identification expectations and through a combination of reward, punishment, direct instruction, and modeling (Chan et al. 2011: 67).

3.3 Feminist Theories

Gender inequality takes many different forms, depending on the economic, social, and cultural structure of a particular society (Lorber 2010: 4). Each feminist theory has its own areas of focus as the causes of gender inequality and thus proposes its own politics as the solutions or remedies.

The first-wave feminism fought for equal legal rights for women. The second-wave feminism, on the other hand, made visible the structural inequalities of the gendered social order and showed that gender is imposed on, rather than developed from individuals (Lorber 2010: 8-9).

As the construction of the questionnaire/interview questions was based on elements of certain feminist theories and politics, below I will briefly present the arguments and ideas of these feminist approaches that will be reflected in my research.

Liberal feminism focuses on (Lorber 2010: 25):

- women's primary responsibility for housework and child care
- gendered division of market labor
- devaluation and low pay for women's jobs
- limitations on procreative choice among others

Its politics are to:

- bring women into occupations and professions dominated by men
- employ equal-representation rules in politics
- promote gender mainstreaming in laws and policies ensuring attention to women's needs
- share parenting and subsidizing child care
- realize legal, accessible, and affordable procreative services

Marxist feminism focuses on (Lorber 2010: 46):

- exploitation of women's unpaid work for the family
- use of women workers as a reserve army of labor
- low pay for women's jobs

Its politics are to have:

- permanent waged work for women
- government-subsidized maternal and child health care
- union organizing of women workers

Socialist feminism focuses on (Lorber 2010: 70):

- the complex inequality of intersecting and differential patterns of racial ethnic, class, and gender economic disadvantage
- unequal pay scales that devalue women's caring and service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching

Its politics are to:

- increase economic opportunities for women
- upgrading women's jobs, especially caring and service work
- redistribution of responsibilities in the family, equal sharing of family work
- government support for care work in the home
- universal entitlements to education, health care, income support

There are many more feminist theories about gender inequality that cannot be integrated in the study, due to the scope of the thesis and the constraints of the research. What is shown above constitutes the elements that are touched upon and examined in my empirical research through questionnaires and interviews.

4. METHODS

4.1 Sampling Method

The target group for my research is the current generation of Chinese people who represents contemporary values, beliefs, and norms in China. So I decide that my research population is people from age 18 to 35.

Probability sample, theoretically, would be the best option for the research, since random sampling provides each unit of the population an equal probability of inclusion in the sample and thus giving a high external validity (Bryman 2008: 171-178). But in practice, it can be very hard if not impossible to get access to official databases in China as a university student and researcher.

In this case, non-probability sampling methods are considered, among which quota sampling is chosen as the most appropriate option. It has the benefits of being cheaper, quicker, and easier to manage while still retaining a better prospect for generalization than convenience sampling. One drawback is its tendency to result in biases as a consequence of under-representing and over-representing people with certain characteristics (Bryman 2008: 186-187), which I will discuss further in the thesis.

4.2 Research Site

For practical reasons, the research was carried out in my hometown in China – Harbin.

Harbin is the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, as well as the economic, political, and cultural center in Northeast China. According to the Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, Harbin has a population of 10,635,971 (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2010), which makes it the tenth most populated city in China. Its GDP in 2011 is about 424.3 billion CNY, which is ranked No. 25 among Chinese cities (Harbin Government website 2012; Xu 2012). Its GDP per capita is 39,896 CNY as calculated and the estimated average annual income is 20030.6 CNY for urban inhabitants (ibid).

There are three advantages of implementing the project on this site. *First*, my familiarity with the circumstances and the environment in the city will be helpful for choosing the most appropriate location for approaching random people and conducting interviews. *Second*, I have better knowledge about what will be the most appropriate and neutral way to approach people for the research in my hometown since there are differences in local cultures and customs between different areas of China. *Third*, there will not be any communication problems that might occur somewhere else because different parts of China speak different dialects and people can instantly hear whether you are local or not.

4.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a very useful and convenient method to get hold of people's perceptions and opinions. It collects direct data of people's answers to preset questions, offering a great level of comparability and generalizability. With the help of online questionnaires, I am able to collect a larger amount of data that is easier to code and compare, despite the restriction to only online populations and concerns about online behavior (Bryman 2008: 653). It saves time, energy, and cost. It is also easier for administration. But there is less control over the quality of the data collected online, which is a feature that affects the research outcome in a way I will discuss below.

The survey was carried out by posting questionnaires online on a Chinese website called "Renren", which is comparable to "facebook" in the western world. Whereas "facebook" is the largest social networking site in the world (eBizMBA 2013), "Renren" is the largest social networking site in China. The users are mostly young urban Chinese, constituting part of my research population. The major restriction of the sample is that the questionnaire can only be reached to people in your circles and your friends' circles. This feature generates a certain level of sample bias, but it is the best option available to reach a larger group of population. The only other alternative to possibly get a high response rate is to circulate questionnaires at university campuses, but that will limit the population to only students, which is not the purpose of my research.

The questionnaire is designed in a way to capture as many aspects as possible regarding people's perceptions of gender inequality, but within the concern of not overtaxing participants. It collects background information of the sample including gender, age, occupation, education level, number of kids and work experiences. These data serve to provide a background context for the research.

The main body is composed of closed questions because they make it much easier to process collected data and they also enhance the comparability of answers. Likert scale is employed because it provides accurate and coherent measurement of the degree of a person's consent to a statement, which is especially useful in measuring people's attitudes, opinions, values and perceptions.

Participants are asked to choose from "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree" for each of the Likert-scale questions. The 23 Likert-scale questions aim to examine perceptions of gender inequality in various fields, mainly including family (childcare, housework, financial responsibility and women's unpaid work), work (sex segregation in the workplace, low-paid work, women's service occupations, and gender wage gap), political participation and representation, reproductive and sexual autonomy, legal rights and measures, and etc. Question 24-26 aim to examine people's gender awareness. Question 27 is an open question aiming to examine Chinese people's understanding of feminism. All the closed questions and answers are pre-coded and each question represents a corresponding concept about gender inequality.

The English version of the questionnaire used in the field is shown in the next two pages.

Perceptions of Gender Inequality

Background Information:

Gender: Man Woman

Age: _____

Occupation: _____

Level of Education:

Middle school

Vocational high school

High school

Vocational college

Bachelor

Master

Doctor

Do you have kids? Yes, I have _____ kid(s). No.

Do you have work experiences? Yes. No.

Please indicate your level of agreement to following statements:

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

1. Women and men <i>should</i> be equal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Women and men are equally treated in the society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel equally treated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Women are taking care of the children more than men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal responsibilities in raising children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Women <i>should</i> bear more responsibilities for housework than men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Women are doing more housework in the home than men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Men <i>should</i> bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Men are paying more for the family than women.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Women's work for the family is undervalued.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Women's unpaid work for the family is exploitation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Women's service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.
17. Men and women *should* be equally involved in national political decisions.
18. Women and men *should* have equal political representation in the government.
19. Men and women *should* have equal legal rights.
20. Women *should* have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.
21. Women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.
22. Gender is imposed on, rather than developed from, individuals. (Gender roles are a product of the society.)
23. The state *should* assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.

24. How often do you read studies on gender inequality?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

25. Do you think gender inequality is increasing or decreasing?

- It's increasing.
- It's decreasing.
- It hasn't changed.
- I don't know.

26. Do you know any women organizations in China?

- Yes.
- No.
- Not sure.

27. What is feminism in your view?

4.4 Interview

Compared to questionnaires, interviews have such benefits as the possibility to establish rapport with the respondent. People would normally feel more 'flattered' or interested if they are asked to be interviewed than if they are asked to fill in a questionnaire. They might value it more when they feel that they are important to someone else and therefore treating it more serious. Response rates from interviews are also higher than other survey designs (Chambliss & Schutt 2010: 178). Interviews allow the possibility to probe and prompt the respondent in the interview process. However, unlike questionnaires, interviews bring along inevitable interviewer variability and interviewer effects.

I have a very contextual approach of interviewing in the field. I ask exactly the same questions as in the digital questionnaires, but by means of face to face interviews I am able to discern interviewees' attitudes and reactions towards each question, hear their answers and then pose follow-up questions where and when necessary. Further questions beyond the preset ones can be of great use and value when the interviewee's answer appears to be out of line or deviating from the norm. Besides the additional data I can collect, interviews also give me the chance to ask for explanations for their answers and allow me to know what interviewees actually think behind the questions, which is a crucial advantage over online surveys.

In the cold winter of -15°C to -28°C , it is impractical to stand downtown on a walking street and ask people to stop for interviews. So I have chosen to interview random people at KFCs in the afternoon instead. The location of KFC is selected in order to enhance accessibility and variety of the sample because it is the most easily accessed indoor public place with a relatively relaxed and free atmosphere, and it is especially popular among young people in China. The time of afternoon is selected in order to increase the response rate as I suppose that people wouldn't want to be disturbed during mealtime. Likert scale is still employed, provided with the tool of 'shows cards' to display all the fixed-choice answers.

Even though there is no better option available under the circumstances, the constraints of the interview setting, including the location and time, condition the access to perfectly random people, hence affecting the representativeness of the sample, leading to some extent of sample bias.

It is essential to ensure a random sample because failure to randomly sample from the population will lead to lack of generalizability. This coverage error, however, is almost inevitable in practice. Not only are there limitations concerning who is accessible, it is also impossible to control who is willing to participate in a social survey. From my interview experiences, I find out that people who refuse to be interviewed have certain common characteristics.

I intended to interview same amount of women and men. But in my experience, for some reason, I have gotten more women than men to participate. Most of the people who refused were men who did not look like university students and who looked older than 25. They usually responded to my polite request with only one sentence – "I do not accept interviews" – together with a seemingly tough attitude and a slightly disdainful tone. Is it because of my gender? Would it be different if I were a man? Or is it the nature of interviewing that scares certain people away? Or is it because of the society which teaches people to be careful and keep certain distance with strangers? No matter the reason, certain people with certain characteristics have composed the rejection group and made the sample biased in this way.

Moreover, my status as a young educated woman has had certain influence over the research process. As the field location is my hometown, there is no positionality concern over race, nationality, or religion. I

consider myself as an *insider* since I am myself within the research population and I grew up in the research site. While my insider status can promise me rapport, easy access, necessary language skills and other benefits (Lee 2001), my educational background certainly has put me in a powerful position. When I introduce myself as a university student doing research for my thesis, I have struggled if I should mention that I am from a Swedish university. People generally have an admiring and complimentary attitude towards students from abroad, which might make them more interested in me and my interviews. It can potentially help increase the chance of people agreeing to be interviewed, but it may simultaneously give interviewees a sense of distance because they might feel that this researcher is far away from their life or even feel subordinate regarding their own educational background and thus exclude me from their group, making me an *outsider* in their eyes. Doing research at home certainly brings complex dynamics in terms of insider/outsider status (Sultana 2007: 378).

My academic privilege has played a role in affecting the interview process and probably also the interview result, although in a way that is not predictable and most likely different for different people. Interviewees might want to leave a good impression on me after they know my research topic, and thus deliberately answer interview questions in a more gender-equal way in order to please me. They might also feel a little intimidated that I am studying abroad and researching on gender inequality, which is a rather rare topic for Chinese people, and therefore try to answer what they think is appropriate according to social desirability.

As a result of lack of human rights and freedom of speech in China, the norm is to avoid discussing politics in public, especially on such sensitive matters as gender inequality. Expressing oneself negatively about China can be really dangerous due to government censorship. Therefore the first and foremost concern and challenge with this method is the risk and danger involved in conducting interviews in public in China.

4.5 Combination of Two Methods

I have chosen to combine the data obtained from these two methods into one final result, i.e. mixing the answers gotten from the interviews to the questions in the questionnaire (without the additional data) together with the answers gotten from online questionnaires, and using them as one dataset. The methodological concern is thus regarding the feasibility and desirability of the combination of two similar yet different research methods.

The purpose of combining the two methods is to take advantage of the benefits of both. On the basis of quantifiable and comparable data collected from questionnaires which can reveal certain patterns and statistical differences in people's perceptions, further analysis can then be achieved with the rich, in-depth and more qualitative data gained from interviews.

Despite the theoretical benefits, data obtained from two different sources are inevitably of different qualities. It is very likely that informants may give different answers when being interviewed and when filling out an online questionnaire. People might be more serious about my research when being interviewed face to face but feel less anonymous on the other hand.

Besides the concern of people not giving real answers to the questions in specific settings, the interpretation of the survey questions is another aspect that significantly affects the quality of the data. For the purpose of the research, the survey questions consist of two dimensions: 1) how people think the reality is; 2) how people think it should be. For instance, in respect of domestic responsibilities between women and men, participants are asked to choose their level of agreement for two similar yet distinct statements:

1. Women *are* doing more housework in the home than men. – Perception of **Reality**
2. Women *should* bear more responsibilities for housework than men. – Perception as in **Value**

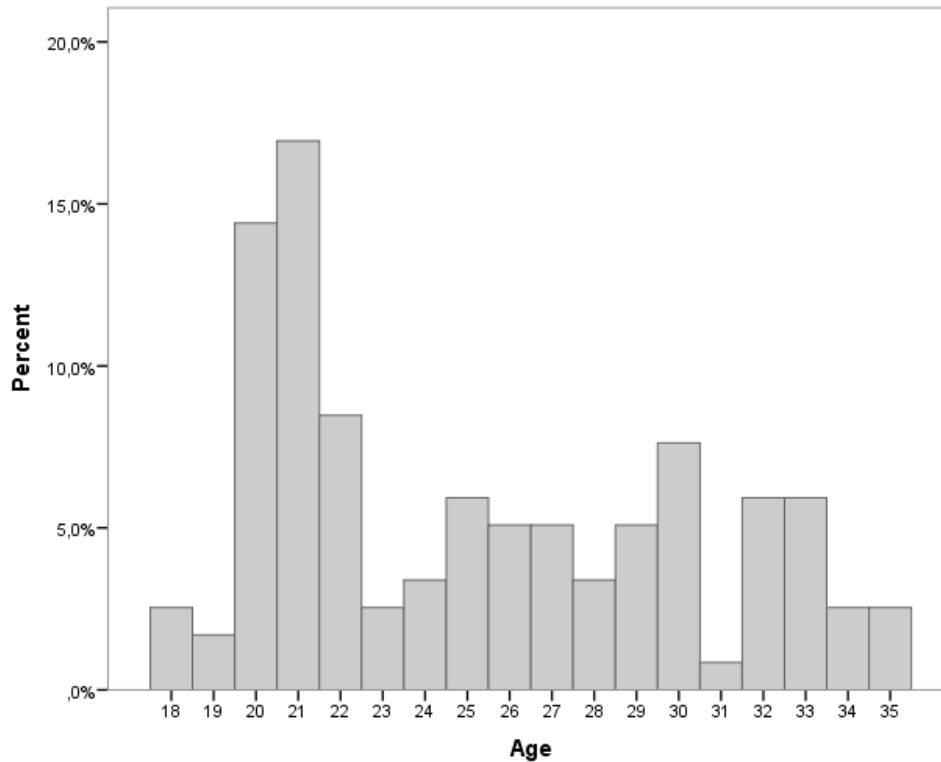
Slight changes of wording are used to show the difference in the questions between reality and value, but understanding is still an obvious problem in practice. In my interview experiences, I often notice interviewee's misinterpretation of the questions. Many have asked: "Isn't this the same question again?" Soon I learned to use tones to indicate the right meaning of interview questions and make sure that interviewees understand. But with online questionnaires, I cannot ensure this understanding, which causes the differences in data quality between these two methods.

Therefore, mixing data collected in two different settings and possessing different features and qualities can lead to certain defects for the analysis, such as compromises of reliability, validity and generalizability.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

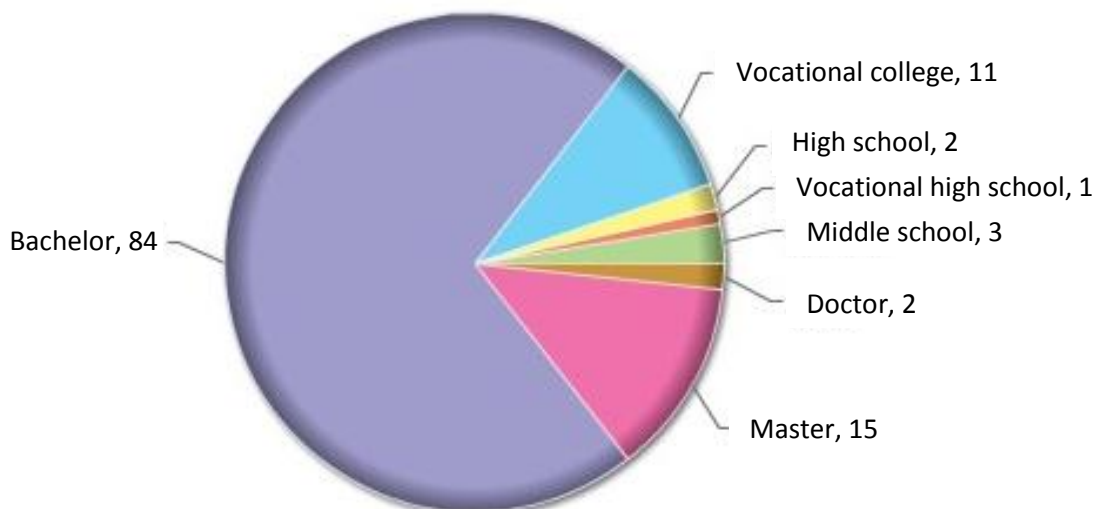
5.1 Sample Description

127 people participated in the research and the data of 9 participants have been identified as invalid and thus erased from the sample. The sample is made up of 118 participants, including 49 men and 69 women. The sample's ages range from 18 to 35. The distribution of the ages of the sample is shown below.



Sample's ages are not disproportionately distributed and have obvious high percentages at age 20 and 21, which affects the representativeness of the sample and thus to some degree violating the possibility to generalize. Other background information of the sample is shown below, including participants' levels of education, if they have kids, and if they have work experiences.

Educational Background



Do you have kids?			Do you have work experiences?		
Yes	17	14.41%	Yes	93	78.81%
No	101	85.59%	No	25	21.19%

5.2 Findings

Next page presents an overview of the survey results of the Likert-scale questions. The mostly selected answer by participants has been marked bold in the table in order to offer a clearer view. Furthermore, the data has been divided into men and women in order to analyze the gender gaps in women and men’s perceptions of gender inequality issues. The gender segregated data of men and women separately are attached in the appendices.

5.2.1 “Women and men should be equal”

This question aims to examine the most basic and general value of gender equality. About 88% of all the participants agree that women and men should be equal, of whom 49% strongly agree. 83.67% of the male participants agree while 91.30% of the female participants agree, creating a 7.63% gender gap between Chinese men and Chinese women regarding the fundamental value of gender equality.

13 out of the 14 people who picked “disagree” or “neutral” were from online questionnaires, so I was not able to investigate their reasons and explanations for their choice. However, I was able to catch one of the “neutral” answers in my interviews.

“I choose a neutral stance on this. I think it depends on from which perspective you see it. Women and men’s social status should be equal, but their social division of labor shouldn’t be equal. Women and men have their separate and different divisions of labor in the society.”

(Male, 28, journalist)

He represents a lot more Chinese people in his thinking. It indicates the existing presence of the traditional cultural value of gendered division of labor. More detailed aspects of this division will be analyzed later in the thesis.

Please indicate your level of agreement to following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women and men <i>should</i> be equal.	0(0%)	5(4.24%)	9(7.63%)	46(38.98%)	58(49.15%)
2. Women and men are equally treated in the society.	5(4.24%)	21(17.80%)	11(9.32%)	37(31.36%)	44(37.29%)
3. I feel equally treated.	3(2.54%)	28(23.73%)	26(22.03%)	40(33.90%)	21(17.8%)
4. Women are taking care of the children more than men.	1(0.85%)	6(5.13%)	12(10.26%)	64(54.70%)	34(29.06%)
5. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal responsibilities in raising children.	2(1.71%)	4(3.42%)	9(7.69%)	59(50.43%)	43(36.75%)
6. Women <i>should</i> bear more responsibilities for housework than men.	17(14.53%)	38(32.48%)	23(19.66%)	31(26.50%)	8(6.84%)
7. Women are doing more housework in the home than men.	9(7.69%)	34(29.06%)	24(20.51%)	39(33.33%)	11(9.40%)
8. Men <i>should</i> bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.	2(1.69%)	14(11.86%)	24(20.34%)	56(47.46%)	22(18.64%)
9. Men are paying more for the family than women.	7(5.98%)	18(15.38%)	32(27.35%)	45(38.46%)	15(12.82%)
10. Women's work for the family is undervalued.	5(4.24%)	33(27.97%)	24(20.34%)	43(36.44%)	13(11.02%)
11. Women's unpaid work for the family is exploitation.	7(5.93%)	57(48.31%)	24(20.34%)	17(14.41%)	13(11.02%)
12. Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.	2(1.69%)	4(3.39%)	10(8.47%)	78(66.10%)	24(20.34%)
13. Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.	4(3.45%)	41(35.34%)	11(9.48%)	42(36.21%)	18(15.52%)
14. Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.	14(12.07%)	61(52.59%)	22(18.97%)	15(12.93%)	4(3.45%)
15. Women's service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales).	9(7.63%)	59(50%)	20(16.95%)	18(15.25%)	12(10.17%)
16. Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.	5(4.27%)	47(40.17%)	29(24.79%)	28(23.93%)	8(6.84%)
17. Men and women <i>should</i> be equally involved in national political decisions.	1(0.85%)	2(1.71%)	8(6.84%)	67(57.26%)	39(33.33%)
18. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal political representation in the government.	1(0.85%)	7(5.98%)	12(10.26%)	64(54.70%)	33(28.21%)
19. Men and women <i>should</i> have equal legal rights.	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.85%)	62(52.99%)	54(46.15%)
20. Women <i>should</i> have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	0(0%)	4(3.45%)	7(6.03%)	60(51.72%)	45(38.79%)
21. Women have autonomy in making procreative and sexual decisions.	1(0.88%)	14(12.28%)	19(16.67%)	52(45.61%)	28(24.56%)
22. Gender is imposed on, rather than developed from, individuals. (Gender roles are a product of the society.)	3(2.59%)	25(21.55%)	27(23.28%)	43(37.07%)	18(15.52%)
23. The state <i>should</i> assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.	1(0.85%)	9(7.69%)	12(10.26%)	61(52.14%)	34(29.06%)

5.2.2 “Women and men are equally treated in the society”

This question can help reveal Chinese people’s level of awareness of gender inequality in the society. The investigation of awareness is important because awareness is the first step towards a full understanding of gender inequality and any further achievement. Hypothetically, the more aware people are of the unequal gender situation, the more they will disagree with this statement. Results show that 68.64% think that women and men are equally treated in the society, of whom 37.29% strongly agree, whereas only 22.03% disagree.

This suggests a low level of gender awareness among Chinese people. This result corresponds to my earliest speculation about the inconsistent relationship between the status quo and people’s perception of the status quo. What makes people not perceive gender inequality? It can be due to people’s lack of awareness owing to a hole in the education system, or people’s acquiescence of the status quo, or the influence of certain cultural values and customs. Lots of factors play a part in people’s perceptions.

This result also corresponds to the literature and can possibly be explained in two ways (Horowitz & Wike 2010; Kinias & Kim 2011). *First*, people in developing countries where gender gaps are bigger, on the other hand, see less inequality than more gender-equal countries. There has not been a well-established consensus on gender equality in China, so people have relatively lower demands or standards of gender equality. *Second*, due to the Confucian culture which does not value equality as much, people do not find inequality as upsetting or unfair, and thus have a bigger tolerance for such inequalities. In other words, people do not perceive as much gender inequality because their expectations for gender equality are not as high and/or they are more acquiescent to such inequalities. As one of the participants said:

“I don’t notice gender discrimination. I’m already used to how it is.”

(Male, 32, salesman)

Another finding is that when being asked if women and men are equally treated in the society, many have pointed out the factor of education and civilization in relation to gender inequality.

“There is no gender inequality in more developed cities. But in less developed areas, there are more cases of unequal treatment of women. It’s related to civilization.”

(Male, 34, financial business)

“It depends on areas. There is equal treatment in high-educated places, but not in low-educated areas.”

(Male, 28, journalist)

“It is closely connected to the level of education.”

(Male, 32, salesman)

5.2.3 “I feel equally treated”

This question aims to explore people’s subjective assessment based on personal experiences. The results show that about half of the people agree, a quarter disagree, and a quarter remain neutral.

A closer investigation on the gender segregated data reveals a big gender gap between women and men’s perceptions of feeling equally treated. The table below shows that 31.88% of the women feel unequally treated while only 18.37% of the men feel unequally treated, causing a gender gap of 13.51% in terms of feeling *unequally* treated. An even bigger gender gap of 26.77% exists in terms of feeling *equally* treated.

<i>I feel equally treated.</i>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.45%	30.43%	27.54%	27.54%	13.04%	40.58% Agree, 31.88% Disagree
Men	4.08%	14.29%	14.29%	42.86%	24.49%	67.35% Agree, 18.37% Disagree

The finding that more women feel unequally treated than men might not seem surprising, given that women are in most cases the victims of gender discrimination. It also confirms the research finding that women see more inequality than men (Horowitz & Wike 2010).

However, it might be a little surprising that more women feel *equally* treated than *unequally* treated. This is also related to the problem of low awareness discussed above. People do not feel so unequally treated when they are not aware of gender equality issues.

Most women in the interviews identified inequality in the workplace as unequal treatment of women. One participant provided another interesting aspect of gender inequality, which relates to the traditional cultural legacy of men carrying on family names.

“I feel that women are unequally treated in that after you give birth to a child, the child will inherit the father’s surname, instead of the mother’s. Women have a hard life. Women have to give birth, take care of the family and daily life. In the end, your kid’s surname always follows the male’s, due to Chinese traditions. This is not fair.”

(Female, 32, accountant, having a 2-year-old child)

On the other hand, some male participants expressed their perspectives of unequal treatment of men, which also reflects part of the reality in contemporary China. Two representative quotes were selected.

“Nowadays, the after 80s and 90s men (men born in the 1980s and 1990s) are just like women. Men cook, women can’t cook. Financial authority is in women’s hands as well. Women neither do housework nor cook meals.”

(Male, 32, finance)

“The society has become woman-dominated. Men have become women. It is men’s inequality. Men have much bigger social responsibility. It’s always men paying. Men have huge financial responsibility and bear high pressure. Further, women always ‘make a scene’ at home.”

(Male, 34, banking)

This reflects the phenomenon that the new generation young people, especially in urban areas, are often spoiled by their parents. They don’t need to do any housework or cook at home. So when they grow up and leave home, they often end up not knowing how to cook or clean, which has become a common problem among youngsters. As to how or if this phenomenon has affected gender perceptions and gender inequality, future research is needed.

5.2.4 Family

Childcare

Reality

83.76% agree that women are taking care of the children more than men; only 5.98% disagree. Little gender gap is found in this respect.

Values

87.18% agree that women and men should have equal responsibilities in raising children; only 5.13% disagree. A gender gap of 6.04% is found in this respect: 83.67% of men agree on equal responsibilities in childcare while 89.71% of women agree.

The results suggest an interesting inconsistency between value and reality: although most of the Chinese people believe in equally sharing childcare, they also admit that the reality is the opposite. This phenomenon corresponds to the literature that even when believing in equal sharing, the husbands mostly give lip-service but remain largely uninvolved in domestic labor (Miller & Sassler 2012). It also brings up the question of what the relationship between people’s value and behavior is. What is the reason behind the contradiction of value and reality?

A mother expressed her complaint about unequal division of childcare.

“My husband has a very good job. He is often very busy... Even though I am also really busy at work, I still take care of the child much more than him.”

(Female, 35, PHD and university teacher, having a 2-year-old kid)

I was able to catch a disagreement on equal sharing.

“I disagree with that women and men should bear equal responsibilities in raising children. Women and men’s roles in the society are different. Most of the time, it is men who have a busy job.”

(Male, 28, journalist)

Housework

Reality

A more mixed result shows up when it comes to perceptions of housework. As shown in the table below, there is a big gender gap in terms of perceptions on if women are doing more housework at home. Whereas women tend to think they do more housework than men, men tend to think the opposite. More men disagree than agree that women are doing more housework, which is a somewhat surprising and confusing finding. The norm seems to be that women do the majority of housework, but research results show a much less confirmed reality. Looking at women’s replies, the hypothesis would easily be that most women agree to the statement; the result, however, shows that only around half of the women agree, while 33.82% disagree. It might simply mean that Chinese women and men are actually sharing lots of domestic labor, maybe not in terms of childcare, but in terms of housework. It also serves as a precaution against the stereotyped thinking in this respect. Chinese people’s perceptions on the reality of doing housework reveal a more gender-equal image than presumed.

Women are doing more housework in the home than men.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	10.29%	23.53%	17.65%	36.76%	11.76%	48.53% Agree, 33.82% Disagree
Men	4.08%	36.73%	24.49%	28.57%	6.12%	40.82% Disagree, 34.69% Agree

Values

The examination on Chinese people’s values of sharing housework finds a big gender gap as well. Whereas women tend to disagree on doing more housework than men, men tend to agree with it. 55.07% of the women disagree on doing more housework while 35.42% of the men disagree, creating a perception gender gap of 19.65%. The results also suggest a less gender-equal picture concerning Chinese people’s value of sharing housework. Even though 55.07% of the women hold a more gender-equal attitude on housework, this number is rather small. It indicates that many Chinese women still have the ideology of traditional gender roles, and even more Chinese men hold this ideology.

Women should bear more responsibilities for housework than men.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	20.29%	34.78%	17.39%	23.19%	4.35%	55.07% Disagree, 27.54% Agree
Men	6.25%	29.17%	22.92%	31.25%	10.42%	41.67% Agree, 35.42% Disagree

Two female interviewees provided their views on doing housework.

“It is a kind of tradition that women do housework. I don’t feel that it is unfair.”

(Female, 22, saleswoman)

“Women do more housework than men? It depends. Some women like to do housework. It depends on different woman.”

(Female, 32, vehicle inspector)

The view that doing more housework is not unfair correlates and confirms with previous research (Greenstein 1996; Zuo & Bian 2001; Kinias & Kim 2011). Due to the influence of cultural values, many Chinese women still hold a traditional view of gender roles and gendered division of labor, and are thus more acceptant or acquiescent regarding doing housework.

Financial responsibility

Reality

Results show that both women and men tend to agree that men are paying more for the family than women. Also, more men than women agree with the statement. 60.42% of the men agree while the 49.28% of the women agree, forming a gender gap of 11.14%. About one fourth of the female participants disagree with the statement while around one third choose neutral.

This generally suggests a picture of men paying more for the family than women. But it is less the case from women’s perspective than from men’s perspective.

Value

Both women and men tend to think that men should bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women. A rather big gender gap of 26.56% is found in the results: while 55.07% of the women agree with men bearing more responsibilities, 81.63% of the men agree with this view. It suggests that women hold a more gender-equal value than men. However, the majority view is still that men should pay more for the family than women.

<i>Men should bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.</i>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.45%	14.49%	28.99%	37.68%	17.39%	55.07% Agree, 15.94% Disagree
Men	2.04%	8.16%	8.16%	61.22%	20.41%	81.63% Agree, 10.20% Disagree

This phenomenon is also a cultural legacy. It confirms the traditional Confucian view that men should be working outside home while women inside home – men over the exterior world and women over the domestic world (Guisso 1982). Therefore, it is deemed a cultural virtue for men to pay more than women. From everyday practice, it is the norm to think that it is an admirable and “gentleman” behavior to pay for the women instead of equal sharing. One participant confirmed this view.

“Men should mainly care about working and earning money, while women should mainly take care of the home.”

(Male, 21, university student)

Two other participants pointed out a reason for men paying more than women.

“Men pay more for the family than women. That’s because men earn more than women.”

(Female, 32, accountant, having a 2-year-old child
& Male, 27, businessman)

Women’s work for the family

Results show that while women tend to think that their work for the family is undervalued, men tend to think the opposite. There is a big gender gap of 21.83% in terms of agreeing on the undervaluation of women’s work for the family.

Women’s work for the family is undervalued.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.45%	24.64%	17.39%	39.13%	17.39%	56.52% Agree, 26.09% Disagree
Men	8.16%	32.65%	24.49%	32.65%	2.04%	40.82% Disagree, 34.69% Agree

In general, Chinese women and men disagree that women’s unpaid work for the family is exploitation. There is a small gender gap of 8.58% in terms of agreeing with the statement, and 4.97% in terms of disagreeing.

Women’s unpaid work for the family is exploitation.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.45%	50.72%	18.84%	14.49%	14.49%	52.17% Disagree, 28.99% Agree
Men	12.24%	44.90%	22.45%	14.29%	6.12%	57.14% Disagree, 20.41% Agree

Two women expressed their understandings in the interviews.

“Women’s work for the family is a kind of love. It is love for the children and the family.”

(Female, 33, accountant)

“Women’s work for the family is undervalued, thus causing lots of marriage failures. Men don’t recognize the value of women’s labor. They take it for granted.”

(Female, 24, civil servant)

Greenstein’s study examined the effects of gender ideology and perceptions of the fairness of the division of household labor on marital quality and found that perceptions of inequity are strongly related to perceived quality of the marital relationship, more for egalitarian than for traditional wives (1996: 1029). The perceptions of fairness have important implications for the quality and even success or failure of a marriage.

5.2.5 Work

Certain jobs more suitable for men

The results indicate general acceptance among Chinese people that certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa. Interestingly, while this view received 76.81% support from the women's side, it received 100% support from the men's side, generating a big gender gap of 23.19%. In this case, Chinese women have a more gender-equal perception whereas Chinese men hold a rather firm belief in gendered job division.

<i>Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.</i>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	2.90%	5.80%	14.49%	62.32%	14.49%	76.81% Agree, 8.70% Disagree
Men	0%	0%	0%	71.43%	28.57%	100% Agree

Participants identified several representative occupations that are more suitable for women and several others for men. More suitable jobs for men are: *heavy physical work, manual labor, farming, woodcutting, detectives, construction workers, electric welding, engineering, and etc.* More suitable jobs for women are: *kindergarten teachers, journalists, editors, accountants, shop assistants, confinement nurses, and etc.* One male participant also expressed his view that *government officials* are more suitable for men than women.

Unequal opportunities in the workplace

Another big gender gap exists when it comes to perceptions of women and men's equal opportunities in the workplace. Whereas women tend to see the inequalities of work opportunities, men tend to see opportunities in the workplace as equal. As shown in the table below, about 2 out of 3 men think it is equal between women and men in the workplace and only 1 out of 4 thinks it is unequal. For women, almost half of the female participants disagree while slightly fewer of them agree.

<i>Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.</i>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	4.35%	43.48%	7.25%	31.88%	13.04%	47.83% Disagree, 44.93% Agree
Men	2.13%	23.40%	12.77%	42.55%	19.15%	61.70% Agree, 25.53% Disagree

What surprises me is that there are still so many women thinking there is equality in the workplace, which contradicts with the supposed reality and the literature. The explanation might be that many women have not experienced gender inequality in the workplace, or they do not notice the inequality, or they have not paid much attention to it.

Many participants expressed their views about workplace inequalities.

“When I look for jobs, the biological companies say that they mainly want men – ‘preference for men’, as said. They want men instead of women because men can go on business trips more often and more easily than women. Women have to consider their families and children. We women study harder than men. But after we graduate, there is great inequality in terms of employment. I guess I’ve learned to accept the status quo as it is.”

(Female, 24, Master graduate in animal medicine)

“Our company rarely hires girls. All the workshop leaders are male. It is always men working in the management sector. Our work has lots of night shifts, not suitable for girls. Besides, women’s marriage leave and maternity leave can take months.”

(Male, 26, production management)

“When looking for jobs, it happens quite often that they don’t even give interviews to girls. Also, women have much lower chances of promotion compared to men.”

(Female, 25, Master student)

One male participant also expressed his view of work inequality towards men.

“I don’t think it is equal between women and men in the workplace. For some jobs, they only hire women, for example, models and shop assistants.”

(Male, 21, student)

These perceptions reflect the findings in previous research on sex segregation in the workplace (Cao 2001; Lam 2004; Guo 2006; Solotaroff 2006). The institutionalized gender discrimination in recruiting and hiring practices is based on the perception norm of gendered division of labor. Some employers reserve certain jobs for men and other for women, based on perceptions of group differences between women and men (Bielby & Baron 1986). Women are largely subject to discrimination in the workplace and are selected for jobs based on their marital and maternal status (World Bank 2000: 8).

Low-paid work

In general, there is disagreement among Chinese people on women getting more low-paid jobs than men. As shown below, over 60% disagree with the view whereas only around 15% agree.

Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	13.04%	53.62%	15.94%	13.04%	4.35%	66.67% Disagree, 17.39% Agree
Men	10.64%	51.06%	23.40%	12.77%	2.13%	61.70% Disagree, 14.89% Agree

The results show inconsistency with the theories of Marxist feminism which regard low pay for women’s jobs as a source and manifestation of gender inequality (Lorber 2010: 46). Whereas the reality might be the case as indicated in the theories, the Chinese people seem to have a tendency to disagree rather than agree with this view.

One possible explanation can be that: when people think about if women get more low-paid jobs than men, they misinterpret it as implying that women are less capable than men. It is especially the case considering the individualistic ideology most of the Chinese people hold: if you get a low-paid job, it is the problem of your own ability. One participant confirmed this ideology by arguing that:

“I don’t agree with that women tend to get more low-paid work than men. I think it all depends on your own educational background.”

(Male, 26, salesman)

Another explanation might be that Chinese people do not notice, and thus are unaware of if women get more low-paid work than men. It relates back to the problem of low awareness discussed earlier. No research, however, has been found that investigates this specific situation. So it is still an assumption that women tend to get more low-paid work than men in China. Future research is needed in order to examine women’s status in this aspect.

Women’s service occupations

Meanwhile, there is also more disagreement than agreement among Chinese people concerning women’s service occupations receiving unequal pay.

Women’s service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales.)						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	7.25%	47.83%	17.39%	15.94%	11.59%	55.07% Disagree, 27.54% Agree
Men	8.16%	53.06%	16.33%	14.29%	8.16%	61.22% Disagree, 22.45% Agree

This examination is based on the theories of Socialist feminism which considers the devaluation of women’s caring and service professions as a source of gender inequality (Lorber 2010: 70). However, different countries have different local contexts and conditions. In China, occupations such as teachers and nurses involve bribery and relations. As participants exposed,

“Teacher and nurses earn rather much in China. Teachers take lots of bribes. The situation is different here in China.”

(Female, 20, student)

“I think it depends on which area. In first-tier cities, they have good incomes, but not in second- or third-tier cities. To become a nurse at the First Affiliated Hospital of Harbin Medical University

(which is the best hospital in Harbin), one first needs to pay at least 100, 000 RMB.”

(Male, 26, production management)

Unequal pay

In respect of unequal pay between women and men, women tend to think that they receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work, whereas men hold the opposite view. As shown below, about every 2 out of 3 men disagree on women getting lower pay than men for the same work, with only 8.33% agree. For women, it presents a different picture. Almost half agree, one third disagree, and about one fifth are neutral. In this case, a rather big gender gap is created: 38.05% in terms of agreeing with the statement and 27.09% in terms of disagreeing.

Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.45%	31.88%	20.29%	37.68%	8.70%	46.38% Agree, 33.33% Disagree
Men	8.33%	52.08%	31.25%	4.17%	4.17%	60.42% Disagree, 8.33% Agree

5.2.6 Political Participation

Results show that the majority of Chinese people support women and men’s equal involvement in national political decisions. 92.75% of the women agree that women and men should be equally involved in national political decisions while 87.50% of the men agree, generating a small gender gap of 5.25%. Only a very small percentage of 2.5% disagree on equal political involvement for women and men.

Lower support is found regarding women and men’s equal political representation in the government. 84.06% of the women agree with the view while 81.25% of the men agree. Interestingly, there are more women disagreeing than men: 7.25% of the female participants disagree compared with 6.25% of the male. Two interviewees expressed their opinions about equal representation in the government for women and men.

“I choose neutral on this one. I think it all depends on individual ability.”

(Female, 28, clerk)

“It’s not necessary to have the same amount of female and male representatives in the government. It’s a matter of ability.”

(Male, 23, student)

5.2.7 Legal Rights and Legal Measures

Almost all the participants agree that women and men should have equal legal rights, with only one “neutral” choice from a male participant. 81.20% of the participants think that the state should assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality, while 8.55% disagree. Interesting views are provided by the interviewees on this issue.

“I think there should be some national policies and rules regarding employment that can help with the inequality women face, even though it might not necessarily work.”

(Female, 25, Master student)

“There is gender discrimination in the workplace. Women should be able to have some legal support when they get discriminated. But all the discrimination is not done openly and publicly in an obvious way. There are always all kinds of excuses and reasons for it... When it comes to domestic problems, it is only the business of two. No law should intervene; otherwise the nature will be changed.”

(Male, 28, journalist)

“I don’t think law can restrict or eliminate gender inequality.”

(Male, 32, finance)

“Legal measures are not necessary. I think it’s better to just let it be, naturally.”

(Female, 32, accountant)

5.2.8 Reproductive and Sexual Autonomy

Reality

As shown in the table below, the majority of Chinese people think that women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions. Less than one seventh of the participants disagree. There is a gender gap of 14.54% in people’s perceptions of the reality.

<i>Women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.</i>						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	1.49%	11.94%	22.39%	38.81%	25.37%	64.18% Agree, 13.43% Disagree
Men	0%	12.77%	8.51%	55.32%	23.40%	78.72% Agree, 12.77% Disagree

Value

Much smaller gender gap is found in terms of people's value about women's reproductive and sexual autonomy. Around 90% of the participants agree that women should have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.

Women <u>should</u> have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Women	0%	2.90%	7.25%	46.38%	43.48%	89.86% Agree, 2.90% Disagree
Men	0%	4.26%	4.26%	59.57%	31.91%	91.49% Agree, 4.26% Disagree

Two participants revealed their views on reproductive decisions.

"I choose neutral on this. It is usually the case that two people negotiate together after getting married."

(Male, 26, production management)

"I don't think women have autonomy in making these decisions. It depends a lot on your family. Many young people's parents want a grandchild. Also, you have to consider a lot of factors and conditions when deciding whether or not to have a baby, such as good economy and etc."

(Female, 25, Master student)

5.2.9 Increasing or Decreasing Gender Inequality?

Participants are also asked to provide their own perceptions on if gender in equality in China has increased, decreased, or stayed the same. As shown below, the majority opinion is that it is decreasing. While around half of the people think it has decreased, the other half has more diverse opinions. A gender gap of 11.35% is also detected, which means that compared to men, women have less belief in gender inequality being decreasing.

Do you think gender inequality is increasing or decreasing?				
	Increasing	Decreasing	Hasn't changed	I don't know
Women	18.84%	47.83%	15.94%	17.39%
Men	16.33%	59.18%	8.16%	16.33%

Some areas of increasing and decreasing gender inequality are identified by the participants.

Decrease:

“Before, parents wish to have a baby boy instead of girl. Nowadays, this preference for boys has largely decreased. The traditional notion of male superiority and female inferiority has diminished.”

(Male, 21, student)

“It’s been decreasing, for example in terms of voting rights. Also, more and more women are doing scientific research.”

(Female, 27, design)

“I think people’s unequal gender notions and values have diminished.”

(Male, 28, journalist)

Increase:

“I think it has increased. Employment and promotion opportunities are very unequal. Women also carry heavier burdens for the child and family.”

(Female, 27, planar design)

“I think the inequality towards men has increased. Women make the calls after marriage. Women control the money in the family. Women make the big decisions. Men are afraid of their wives at home. In my home, I am the one deciding. Should we protect men, or women?”

(Female, 26, businesswoman)

“Gender inequality has increased. Even though women can work now, their competitiveness is much weaker than men when looking for jobs. Men possess advantages. So it is just a change of the manifestation mode of gender inequality.”

(Male, 32, salesman)

5.2.10 Knowledge and Attention

In general, Chinese people have a low level of attention to gender studies. But more than half of the participants know the existence of women organizations in China. Informants mostly identified the All China Women’s Federation (ACWF) as the women’s organization in the interviews.

<i>How often do you read studies on gender inequality?</i>					
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Women	36.23%	37.68%	24.64%	1.45%	0%
Men	38.78%	42.86%	16.33%	2.04%	0%

An interesting finding is that more men than women know about women’s organizations in China, as shown below. It could possibly be explained by the fact that men pay more attention than women to news, politics, and other information in China. It is a common phenomenon in China that men are more interested in political news whereas women are more interested in entertainment news.

<i>Do you know any women organizations in China?</i>			
	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	50.72%	31.88%	17.39%
Men	63.27%	30.61%	6.12%

The results also reveal a negative picture of women’s awareness in China. The goal of female organizations is to help Chinese women, and the first step is to inform them. But only half of the women are aware of the existence of any feminist organizations. From the perspective of women organizations in China, the result implies that much more effort is needed in at least making Chinese women know where to turn for help.

5.2.11 What Is Feminism

The research also examined young Chinese people’s understanding of feminism. The last question in the questionnaire is: *What is feminism in your view?* The answers to this open-ended question have been divided by gender and coded into various themes, as shown below. Invalid data such as copies from the internet have been erased.

“What is feminism?” – men’s answers

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Equality	12
Equal rights	4
Analyze the reasons of gender inequality and strive for gender equality	2
Equal treatment	2
A society of gender equality, to eliminate inequality	2
Equal social status	1
Equal opportunities	1
Patriarchy	9
Opposite to patriarchy	6
Matriarchy	2
Women bear the responsibilities of men.	1
Dominant	9
Women decide.	4
Women’s status superior to men	2
Women take dominant positions.	2
Women are more important than men.	1
Rights	5
Equal rights between men and women	2
Women and men should have equal legal and political rights, but that’s all.	1
Equal rights in life, work, education and health care	1
Help women get their deserved rights	1
Independence	2
Women have their own thoughts, independent	1
Women make their own decisions.	1
Other answers:	
Women have a say.	1
Women possess power outside home.	1
Feminism exists because of inequality.	1
Just to make women care more about debates on inequality	1
Without a full understanding of the social circumstances, overly emphasize women being unequally treated, overly ask for the increase of women’s status	1
To emphasize gender equality is itself a kind of inequality	1

As long as you treat your own mom well	1
Like that women empress Wu Zetian (武则天)	1
To seek higher status for oneself	1
The premise and assumptions of the so-called feminism are that women are put in a lower position, so feminism is just nonsense. Women and men should enjoy equal legal and political rights, but nothing more. Everything else depends on one's own efforts. People of different personalities, educational background and values have different social division of labor, just as gender. Could people say that there is personality discrimination, IQ discrimination, or education discrimination?	1
I don't know/I'm not sure.	9
Don't want to answer. The question is too sharp.	1

“What is feminism?” – women’s answers

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Equality	24
Gender equality	10
Equal social status	3
Equality in all aspects, such as family, work, and etc.	3
Equal opportunities in the workplace	2
Equal obligations, responsibilities and rights	2
Advocacy of fair treatment of women in social and family life	1
Equality in economic and political status	1
Emphasize women and men possess equal power and receive equal respect	1
Eliminate all types of discrimination women face in the society	1
Rights	13
Equal rights	4
Fight for women’s rights	4
Safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of women in the society	3
Women have their rights.	1
Women have the right to decide their own fate, occupation, and marriage.	1
Dominant	9
Women decide.	3
Women are dominant.	3
Women decide everything.	2
Women in charge of everything	1
Independence	9
Independence, self-reliance	5
Economic independence	2
Not relying on men	1
Mental independence	1
Respect	4
Respect for women	3
Women and men receive equal respect.	1
Have a say	3
Women have a say. Women have the right to speak.	2
Women’s words matter, esp. politically.	1

Freedom	3
Women have freedom to do what they want.	1
Freedom and liberation	1
Marital freedom	1
Other answers:	
Opposite of patriarchy	1
Matriarchy, like ancient societies	1
Women possess power.	1
Advocacy of women having more control	1
Women are not worse than men.	1
Women's role in the family is raised.	1
Excessive pursuit of women's status in the society being higher than men	1
Overly emphasize equality between women and men	1
Overly emphasize women's rights	1
Exaggerate women's power	1
If too radical, has the possibility of evolving into reverse discrimination	1
I think that the so-called "feminism" is imposed on women by a male-dominated society, because they believe that this is a threat to their paramount privileges and rights. Nowadays, the men are generally weak, so they always put the hat of "feminism" on women, as if they are so innocent.	1
I think that feminism is just women demanding equal treatment, but it's been exaggerated by some people thinking that women have to be in a dominant position in social life and workplace.	1
I don't know/I'm not sure.	11
I don't know. Maybe women's special rights? Never touched upon it since I majored in natural sciences.	1

A comparison between what feminism is for young Chinese men and what it is for young Chinese women can be drawn from coding results.

As shown, most of the male participants understand feminism as “equality”, “opposite to patriarchy”, or “female dominant”. While the term feminism actually means gender equality, it is surprising that many men have identified patriarchy as the opposite meaning of feminism and regard feminism as a world dominated by women. The results suggest that lots of Chinese men have a rather partial and often wrong conceptualization and understanding of feminism.

The term “feminism” can be translated to Chinese in two ways:

- 1) 女权主义 (nv quan zhu yi)
- 2) 女性主义 (nv xing zhu yi)

The first translation is widespread in China, but problematic in its indications. The second character “quan” means power, authority, and right in Chinese, which easily leads people to perceive this term as women possessing power and authority. It explains why some people see feminism as the opposite of patriarchy, as patriarchy means a society of men possessing authority over women. The term is thus seen by some as “very aggressive, non-feminine, and anti-man” (Wesoky 2002: 105), which also explains those very negative perceptions of feminism by some participants.

Whereas “nv quan” is strong and shocking, “nv xing” is relatively mild, which is good in a way that it does not appear too radical for the authorities. But “nv xing” can also be misleading in that it makes people think of “femininity” (Wesoky 2002: 106). In China, the use of the term feminism comes with precaution. “nv xing zhu yi” might be better accepted than “nv quan zhu yi” due to cultural issues, just like how “capitalist” is not accepted but “socialist market economy” is accepted (ibid).

Chinese women, on the other hand, have a better and more correct understanding of feminism than Chinese men. Most of the female participants identified feminism as “gender equality” and “equal rights”. Many pointed out the concepts of “independence”, “respect”, “have a say”, and “freedom” in their understanding of the term feminism. But there are also many female participants who see feminism as a world of female dominance, as the male participants do.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The research has examined young Chinese people's gender perceptions in many diverse aspects. The results reveal both their perceptions of the reality and their gender values.

The majority of Chinese people have general acceptance of gender equality, although traditional cultural values of gendered division of labor are still prevalent in many dimensions of gender inequality. Women have more gender-equal values, beliefs and attitudes than men. Women see more inequality and are also more pro gender equality than men.

The results suggest a very low level of gender awareness among Chinese people. People have lower expectations for gender equality and they are more acquiescent to such inequalities. There is a big gender gap in terms of feeling equally treated – much more women feel *unequally* treated than men. However, there are more people feeling *equally* treated than *unequally* treated, whether men or women.

In the domestic sphere, the results reveal an inconsistency between value and reality in respect of childcare – although most of the Chinese people believe in equal sharing of childcare, they admit that the reality is the opposite. Compared to the great inequalities in terms of childcare, there is less gender inequality in terms of housework. The examination of people's perceptions of reality suggests a more gender-equal image than presumed. A less gender-equal picture is found in people's values of sharing housework, implying a more traditional ideology of gender roles in respect of housework. Big gender gaps are found in both perceptions of reality and values regarding women doing more housework.

The results also suggest a picture of men paying more for the family than women, but it is less the case from women's perspective than men's. A big gender gap is found in people's values regarding financial responsibilities. Much more men than women agree that men should bear more responsibilities for the family than women. But the majority view is still that men should pay more, which is seen as a cultural virtue.

Another finding is that while women tend to think that their work for the family is undervalued, men tend to think the opposite. There is a big gender gap in terms of agreeing on the undervaluation of women's work for the family. However, Chinese women and men generally disagree that women's unpaid work for the family is exploitation.

In the work sphere, there is general agreement among Chinese people that certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa, with 100% agreement from the male participants. A big gender gap in this aspect indicates Chinese men's firm belief in gendered job segregation and Chinese women's more gender-equal values. A big gender gap also exists in perceptions of women and men's equal opportunities in the workplace. Gender discrimination in recruiting and hiring practices is again confirmed as a major gender inequality women face and feel unfair towards. Besides, women tend to think that they receive lower pay than men for comparable work, whereas men hold the opposite view.

In general, there is disagreement among Chinese people on women getting more low-paid jobs than men, which might indicate the reality, but can also be a result of low awareness or individualistic ideology regarding personal abilities. Meanwhile, there is more disagreement than agreement among Chinese people concerning women's service occupations receiving unequal pay, due to China's local contexts.

In terms of political participation, large support is found for women and men's equal involvement in national political decisions while less support is found for women and men's equal political representation in the government. Almost all the participants agree that women and men should have equal legal rights and the majority think that the state should assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.

The majority of Chinese people think that women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions, with fewer women agreeing than men. More agreement is found in people's values that women should have autonomy in this aspect.

Around half of the participants think gender inequality is decreasing in China, suggesting a positive attitude among Chinese people. However, Chinese people have a low level of attention to gender studies. Most of the participants *rarely* or *never* read studies on gender inequality. About half of the participants know the existence of women organizations in China, mainly the ACWF, and more men than women are aware of women's organizations. It reveals a negative picture of women's awareness in China.

A comparison between young Chinese men's and women's understanding of feminism shows that women have more correct and positive perceptions of feminism than men. Despite a correct understanding of feminism as "equality", many men also identified "opposite to patriarchy" and "female dominant" as feminism. Women, on the other hand, tend to think of feminism as "gender equality", "equal rights", and "independence". But many women also see feminism as world of female dominance.

Areas such as health, sexual violence and abuse, education are not examined in the study, which is a major limitation of the research. The sample number of 118 is relatively small compared to the urban population of Harbin, posing the limit for generalization.

7. APPENDICES

- 1) Likert-Scale Questions Results (men and women combined)**
- 2) Gender Segregated Data – Men**
- 3) Gender Segregated Data – Women**

Please indicate your level of agreement to following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women and men <i>should</i> be equal.	0(0%)	5(4.24%)	9(7.63%)	46(38.98%)	58(49.15%)
2. Women and men are equally treated in the society.	5(4.24%)	21(17.80%)	11(9.32%)	37(31.36%)	44(37.29%)
3. I feel equally treated.	3(2.54%)	28(23.73%)	26(22.03%)	40(33.90%)	21(17.8%)
4. Women are taking care of the children more than men.	1(0.85%)	6(5.13%)	12(10.26%)	64(54.70%)	34(29.06%)
5. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal responsibilities in raising children.	2(1.71%)	4(3.42%)	9(7.69%)	59(50.43%)	43(36.75%)
6. Women <i>should</i> bear more responsibilities for housework than men.	17(14.53%)	38(32.48%)	23(19.66%)	31(26.50%)	8(6.84%)
7. Women are doing more housework in the home than men.	9(7.69%)	34(29.06%)	24(20.51%)	39(33.33%)	11(9.40%)
8. Men <i>should</i> bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.	2(1.69%)	14(11.86%)	24(20.34%)	56(47.46%)	22(18.64%)
9. Men are paying more for the family than women.	7(5.98%)	18(15.38%)	32(27.35%)	45(38.46%)	15(12.82%)
10. Women's work for the family is undervalued.	5(4.24%)	33(27.97%)	24(20.34%)	43(36.44%)	13(11.02%)
11. Women's unpaid work for the family is exploitation.	7(5.93%)	57(48.31%)	24(20.34%)	17(14.41%)	13(11.02%)
12. Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.	2(1.69%)	4(3.39%)	10(8.47%)	78(66.10%)	24(20.34%)
13. Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.	4(3.45%)	41(35.34%)	11(9.48%)	42(36.21%)	18(15.52%)
14. Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.	14(12.07%)	61(52.59%)	22(18.97%)	15(12.93%)	4(3.45%)
15. Women's service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales).	9(7.63%)	59(50%)	20(16.95%)	18(15.25%)	12(10.17%)
16. Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.	5(4.27%)	47(40.17%)	29(24.79%)	28(23.93%)	8(6.84%)
17. Men and women <i>should</i> be equally involved in national political decisions.	1(0.85%)	2(1.71%)	8(6.84%)	67(57.26%)	39(33.33%)
18. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal political representation in the government.	1(0.85%)	7(5.98%)	12(10.26%)	64(54.70%)	33(28.21%)
19. Men and women <i>should</i> have equal legal rights.	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(0.85%)	62(52.99%)	54(46.15%)
20. Women <i>should</i> have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	0(0%)	4(3.45%)	7(6.03%)	60(51.72%)	45(38.79%)
21. Women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	1(0.88%)	14(12.28%)	19(16.67%)	52(45.61%)	28(24.56%)
22. Gender is imposed on, rather than developed from, individuals. (Gender roles are a product of the society.)	3(2.59%)	25(21.55%)	27(23.28%)	43(37.07%)	18(15.52%)
23. The state <i>should</i> assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.	1(0.85%)	9(7.69%)	12(10.26%)	61(52.14%)	34(29.06%)

Gender Segregated Data – Men	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women and men <i>should</i> be equal.	0(0%)	4(8.16%)	4(8.16%)	20(40.82%)	21(42.86%)
2. Women and men are equally treated in the society.	1(2.04%)	8(16.33%)	6(12.24%)	16(32.65%)	18(36.73%)
3. I feel equally treated.	2(4.08%)	7(14.29%)	7(14.29%)	21(42.86%)	12(24.49%)
4. Women are taking care of the children more than men.	0(0%)	1(2.04%)	6(12.24%)	31(63.27%)	11(22.45%)
5. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal responsibilities in raising children.	1(2.04%)	3(6.12%)	4(8.16%)	27(55.1%)	14(28.57%)
6. Women <i>should</i> bear more responsibilities for housework than men.	3(6.25%)	14(29.17%)	11(22.92%)	15(31.25%)	5(10.42%)
7. Women are doing more housework in the home than men.	2(4.08%)	18(36.73%)	12(24.49%)	14(28.57%)	3(6.12%)
8. Men <i>should</i> bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.	1(2.04%)	4(8.16%)	4(8.16%)	30(61.22%)	10(20.41%)
9. Men are paying more for the family than women.	4(8.33%)	4(8.33%)	11(22.92%)	19(39.58%)	10(20.83%)
10. Women’s work for the family is undervalued.	4(8.16%)	16(32.65%)	12(24.49%)	16(32.65%)	1(2.04%)
11. Women’s unpaid work for the family is exploitation.	6(12.24%)	22(44.90%)	11(22.45%)	7(14.29%)	3(6.12%)
12. Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	35(71.43%)	14(28.57%)
13. Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.	1(2.13%)	11(23.40%)	6(12.77%)	20(42.55%)	9(19.15%)
14. Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.	5(10.64%)	24(51.06%)	11(23.40%)	6(12.77%)	1(2.13%)
15. Women’s service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales).	4(8.16%)	26(53.06%)	8(16.33%)	7(14.29%)	4(8.16%)
16. Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.	4(8.33%)	25(52.08%)	15(31.25%)	2(4.17%)	2(4.17%)
17. Men and women <i>should</i> be equally involved in national political decisions.	1(2.08%)	0(0%)	5(10.42%)	29(60.42%)	13(27.08%)
18. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal political representation in the government.	1(2.08%)	2(4.17%)	6(12.5%)	28(58.33%)	11(22.92%)
19. Men and women <i>should</i> have equal legal rights.	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(2.08%)	26(54.17%)	21(43.75%)
20. Women <i>should</i> have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	0(0%)	2(4.26%)	2(4.26%)	28(59.57%)	15(31.91%)
21. Women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	0(0%)	6(12.77%)	4(8.51%)	26(55.32%)	11(23.40%)
22. Gender is imposed on, rather than developed from, individuals. (Gender roles are a product of the society.)	3(6.25%)	14(29.17%)	5(10.42%)	19(39.58%)	7(14.58%)
23. The state <i>should</i> assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.	1(2.08%)	4(8.33%)	4(8.33%)	26(54.17%)	13(27.08%)

Gender Segregated Data – Women	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women and men <i>should</i> be equal.	0(0%)	1(1.45%)	5(7.25%)	26(37.68%)	37(53.62%)
2. Women and men are equally treated in the society.	4(5.80%)	13(18.84%)	5(7.25%)	21(30.43%)	26(37.68%)
3. I feel equally treated.	1(1.45%)	21(30.43%)	19(27.54%)	19(27.54%)	9(13.04%)
4. Women are taking care of the children more than men.	1(1.47%)	5(7.35%)	6(8.82%)	33(48.53%)	23(33.82%)
5. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal responsibilities in raising children.	1(1.47%)	1(1.47%)	5(7.35%)	32(47.06%)	29(42.65%)
6. Women <i>should</i> bear more responsibilities for housework than men.	14(20.29%)	24(34.78%)	12(17.39%)	16(23.19%)	3(4.35%)
7. Women are doing more housework in the home than men.	7(10.29%)	16(23.53%)	12(17.65%)	25(36.76%)	8(11.76%)
8. Men <i>should</i> bear more financial responsibilities for the family than women.	1(1.45%)	10(14.49%)	20(28.99%)	26(37.68%)	12(17.39%)
9. Men are paying more for the family than women.	3(4.35%)	14(20.29%)	21(30.43%)	26(37.68%)	5(7.25%)
10. Women’s work for the family is undervalued.	1(1.45%)	17(24.64%)	12(17.39%)	27(39.13%)	12(17.39%)
11. Women’s unpaid work for the family is exploitation.	1(1.45%)	35(50.72%)	13(18.84%)	10(14.49%)	10(14.49%)
12. Certain jobs are more suitable for men and vice versa.	2(2.90%)	4(5.80%)	10(14.49%)	43(62.32%)	10(14.49%)
13. Women and men have equal access/share equal opportunities in the workplace.	3(4.35%)	30(43.48%)	5(7.25%)	22(31.88%)	9(13.04%)
14. Women tend to get more low-paid work than men.	9(13.04%)	37(53.62%)	11(15.94%)	9(13.04%)	3(4.35%)
15. Women’s service occupations and professions, such as nursing and teaching are undervalued. (These occupations receive unequal pay scales).	5(7.25%)	33(47.83%)	12(17.39%)	11(15.94%)	8(11.59%)
16. Women receive lower pay than men for the same or comparable work.	1(1.45%)	22(31.88%)	14(20.29%)	26(37.68%)	6(8.70%)
17. Men and women <i>should</i> be equally involved in national political decisions.	0(0%)	2(2.90%)	3(4.35%)	38(55.07%)	26(37.68%)
18. Women and men <i>should</i> have equal political representation in the government.	0(0%)	5(7.25%)	6(8.70%)	36(52.17%)	22(31.88%)
19. Men and women <i>should</i> have equal legal rights.	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	36(52.17%)	33(47.83%)
20. Women <i>should</i> have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	0(0%)	2(2.90%)	5(7.25%)	32(46.38%)	30(43.48%)
21. Women have autonomy in making reproductive and sexual decisions.	1(1.49%)	8(11.94%)	15(22.39%)	26(38.81%)	17(25.37%)
22. Gender is imposed on, rather than developed from, individuals. (Gender roles are a product of the society.)	0(0%)	11(16.18%)	22(32.35%)	24(35.29%)	11(16.18%)
23. The state <i>should</i> assume legal measures in reducing gender inequality.	0(0%)	5(7.25%)	8(11.59%)	35(50.72%)	21(30.43%)

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