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**Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of  
Women's Representation in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949)  
and *People's Daily* (1950-2012)**

By

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

**Durham University**

2022

Supervisors: Dr. Qing Cao

Dr. Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián

Dedicated to my family

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself. No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted previously by any other candidate for another degree or qualification at Durham University or any other university or institute of learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis would not have been possible without the constant support of supervisors, family members and friends, who have continuously provided tremendous help, particularly in difficult times of pandemic. I am exceedingly grateful to Dr. Cao, an ideal teacher, mentor and supervisor, offering advice and encouragement with a perfect blend of insight and instruction. Many thanks to Dr. Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián, who provided helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks to staff at MLAC, University of Durham, especially Ms. Luck for her patience and assistance. Immense gratitude as always to my family members for their love and support, who endured this long process with me.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore and analyse women's representations in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949) and *People's Daily* (1950-2012) in China over a period of 140 years (1872-2012). Combining the quantitative corpus analysis of 1.9 million words of data with qualitative analyses using critical discourse analysis (CDA), it examines four distinctive historical eras in the press portrayal of women: late imperial Qing (1872–1911), Republican (1912–1949), socialist (1950-1978) and the post-socialist (1979-2012). During these 140 years, China experienced dramatic socio-cultural shifts and political transformations under the guidance of different ideologies over this crucial historical time. Women were placed right in the centre of this turmoil, and women's roles have continuously been renewed, recreated, defended and modified (Williams, 1977).

Women were deemed inferior to men were nothing more than the result of social constructions. Women's representations are embedded in ideological frameworks supported by existing power relations in the patriarchal society. They operated in the symbolic world through discursive construction that defines women in ways that shape the social understanding of their role, status and identities. This construction of women by the dominant forces in society serves to sustain the existing patriarchal power relations. The thesis focuses on newspapers because of its central role in shaping public opinions, setting agendas, and maintaining power structure. Broadsheet newspapers have the power to define key issues, topics, and situations which gives them ideological power.

CDA pays attention to both the macro-level of context through a top-down approach, and the micro-level by analysing how ideologies, dominance and power relations are expressed in language. In contrast, Corpus Linguistics (CL) deals with large amounts of text by providing detailed information of the micro-level. CL is basically a bottom-up approach, allowing the data generated in a corpus to take the lead, and thereby limits bias. The data generated by corpus analytical tools in CL is not handpicked data selected by the analyst, it is typical and representative linguistic patterns that have been extracted from a large amount of data.

Women's representations have undergone significant transformations across the four historical eras in China as some women gain more economic independence and could challenge the power hierarchies. In the late Qing era, women were not described as the opposite gender of

men, but are represented as the weak, incompetent, decadent, and pathological symbol of pre-modernity in *Shen Bao*. Articles in *Shen Bao* promoted representations of women as “Mothers of the Nation” and “Heroines”, which are variations of traditional “good wife and mother” and “devoted to husband and son” sugar-coated with modern nationalism. In the socialist era, women were mostly represented as strong, masculine, selfless, and ideologically correct workers in the labour force, and as emotionally and physically the same as men. Women lived and breathed for the state, and were willing to devote their lives, youth and efforts to communism and socialism. In the post-socialist era, women’s representations in the *People’s Daily* are more diverse. Discourses on women throughout the 140 years acted as a tool to legitimize various national agendas.

This study offers empirical evidence and provides a macro level picture of the transformation of women’s representations in the 140 years of history, underpinning the drive behind; also a micro level analysis of detailed discussion on the confliction and consistencies of women discourse over the four historical eras. Women’s studies have their origin outside of China, in the west. I hope this study will shed some light onto the many components of the scarcely researched localization of west women theories into Chinese terms, which I believe is the next important issue and the next biggest challenge in women’s studies in China.

## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>CDA</b>	Critical Discourse Analysis
<b>CL</b>	Corpus Linguistics
<b>RSA</b>	Repressive State Apparatuses
<b>ISA</b>	Ideological State Apparatuses
<b>DAW</b>	Division for the Advancement of Women
<b>ACWF</b>	The All-China Women's Federation
<b>FWCW</b>	The Fourth World Conference on Women
<b>CCP</b>	The Chinese Communist Party
<b>CCTV</b>	China Central TV
<b>KMT</b>	The Kuomintang or the Chinese Nationalist Party
<b>ELEXIS</b>	The European Lexicographic Infrastructure
<b>PRC</b>	The People's Republic of China
<b>SOE</b>	State-owned enterprises
<b>CNY or RMB</b>	Chinese yuan
<b>MQWW</b>	Ming Qing Women's Writings database
<b>POS</b>	Part of speech
<b>NLP</b>	Natural language processing
<b>UNESCO</b>	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Thesis overview

This thesis explores women's representation in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949) and *People's Daily* (1950-2012) in China over a time period of 140 years (1872-2012). It covers four distinctive historical eras: late imperial Qing (1872–1911), Republican (1912–1949), socialist (1950-1978) and the post-socialist (1979-2012). China experienced dramatic socio-cultural shifts and political transformations under the guidance of different ideologies over this crucial historical time. As a result of China's drastic changes, women's representation and the constructions of women's roles have continuously been renewed, recreated, defended and modified (Williams, 1977). This introduction provides an overview on key theories and methods adopted by this thesis to examine the impact of power and ideology on shaping women's representations in the two newspapers. This is followed by an explanation of the thesis structure.

## 1.2 Key literature and research methods

### 1.2.1 *Discourse as representation: the process of constructing the reality*

Cao refers to the social process of the re-presenting of reality as representation (Cao, 2014), which is the process of constructing the reality. Fairclough (2015) defines representation as the meanings assigned to groups and their social practices through the language that is used in a text or speech. However, the mere construction of meanings through language is insufficient. According to Hall, languages work through representation to construct the reality. Representation is a primary or constitutive process to actively construct meaning (Hall, 1997). Representation is not about the media reflecting or distorting reality, but the many meanings a representation can generate. Meaning is constituted by representation.

As for the question of how to construct social reality, scholars point to discourse. Berger and Luckmann (Berger and Luckmann, 1991) claim that *language* is a major society-forming tool as it enables objectivation, institutionalization and legitimation, merging subjective representations of social reality. For Foucault (2019) it is *discourse* that shapes the social world.

In his view, discourses form the objects of which they speak, or constitute these objects, and it is through discourses and the “regimes of truth” they create that the social production of meaning takes place and power relations are preserved. Fairclough (2015) refers to discourse as a social practice of representing the world. Later scholars accentuate the dialectical relation with society, and see discourse as a form of social practice: discourse is both socially constitutive and socially constituted; in other words, “the discursive event is shaped by the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) but it also shapes them” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258).

Media discourse, of particular concern here, is a way of talking about and acting upon the world which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices (Gunnarsson, 1997, p. 202). Fairclough (2015, p. 82) writes: “A single text on its own is quite insignificant: the effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth.” A similar point about repetition is made by Stubbs (2001), who argues that repeated patterns show that evaluative meanings are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, but widely shared in a discourse community. A word, phrase or construction may trigger a cultural stereotype. Discourse becomes a key tool in creating, reproducing and challenging power relations within society as it legitimates control or naturalizes the social order (Wodak, 2011). The power of media discourse lies to a large extent in its potential to create, shape and consolidate people’s ideas of events happening beyond their immediate experience (Kopytowska, 2016). The media does not simply recount events; media also interprets and explains them in an attempt to influence the audience (Cao, 2014). The media’s ability to define issues, topics and situations gives them ideological power (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

### *1.2.2 Discourse and Power: behind the constructed reality*

In terms of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fairclough (1992) denounces the suggestion of an automatic causal link between registers/codes and social groups. He argues that variance or unevenness stretches across social institutions, and that a socially and sociologically realistic theory must be able to accommodate it. The key to such variance, in Fairclough’s theory, is power. Fairclough defined power as domination or leadership across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of society. According to Weber, power refers to the possibility of having one’s own will within a social relationship against the will and interest of others in a

social system (Guzzini, 2017). Van Dijk's definition of power is the faculty to exert control over the thought and action of others in one's own interests (van Dijk, 1993). This study adopts this perspective of this definition, again, with the focus on "control over others".

Power has more resources and capabilities to define and interpret. However, these processes are all rooted from the profit of the ruling, and to maintain the power of the ruling. Also, these interpretations and definition processes are carried out through discourse construction, which in turn causes the defined groups to lose power and puts them at the disadvantageous position of being defined and constructed. Thus, the advantageous position in power is secured. Hence, discourse is power.

### *1.2.3 Ideology: disseminating constructed realities*

Fairclough describes ideology as a particular representation of some aspect of the world which might be alternatively represented, and where any given representation can be associated with some particular "social base", and "assumptions which are built into practices which sustain relations of domination, usually in a covert way (Toolan, 2002, p. 152)". According to Fowler, "anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position (Fowler, 1991, p. 10)". In terms of CDA, ideology consists of shared beliefs and doctrines among particular social groups and that sense of correspondence gives power to the ideology of those groups when they are the dominant powers in any society (Fowler, 1979). Power, through ideology, tries to fix the meaning of a representation in a 'preferred meaning'. According to Calzada-Perez (2003), ideology is linked with the concepts of power relations and domination, as she quoted from Eagleton, "[ideology is] ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interest of a ruling group or class by distortion or dissimulation (Eagleton, 1991, p. 4)".

Ideological acquisition, legitimating in general ideological accounts are usually discursive (van Dijk, 2006). Ideology plays a critical role in shaping and framing the language. "Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position (Fowler, 1991, p. 10)". Fairclough (1995) believes that ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced by language. Van Dijk added that Ideology as a political or social system of ideas, values or prescriptions of groups or other collectives (van Dijk, 1998b, p. 116), and the theory of ideology need to have a "cognitive component" that deals properly with it as being belief system (p. 2). Just as the concept of *representation*, the focus of ideology is people's perception

and acceptance of the ideology. There is a common intersection in all four of the above-mentioned concepts, that is, to exert control or to influence others. All the above-mentioned scholars provide a variety of explanations for the ways in which ideology and discourse function to convince people to accept systems of social inequality and to reinforce power, particularly reasoning why all people consent to unequal relations of social power. They also illuminate possibilities for resistance to ideological power and for social change.

When the ideology is of the ruling group, it is thus regarded as the dominant ideology. The notion of ideology was used to describe the process through which the dominant ideas within a given group reflects the interests of a ruling group. Antonio Gramsci propounds Cultural Hegemony theory, which refers to the dominant ideology and major institution which represent the ruling group's interest and benefit. It is achieved by controlling cultural content and establishes customs and tradition. Among the advances made by Culture Hegemony theory is the attention to hegemonic power as an often-implicit common sense. Gramsci claims that in the process of maintaining, protecting and developing the ideology of the ruling group, publishing - including broadcasting, newspapers and magazines - is the most feasible and effective means. He considers language, ideology, and communication significantly instrumental in establishing any hegemonic leadership. In general, power (people / institutions / ideologies) has more resources and capabilities to define and interpret. These interpretations and definition processes are carried out through discourse construction, which in turn causes the defined groups to lose power and enter the disadvantageous position of being defined and constructed.

#### *1.2.4 The correlation of Discourse, Ideology, and Power*

Thus, Fairclough (2003, p. 9) speaks of the role of discourse in “inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies”, and Wodak (2011) sets a goal for CDA to demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies. Discourse, power and ideology are closely related. Discourse expresses ideology; ideology construct, maintaining, or altering power. Power enacts discourse. Therefore, discourse establishes, maintains or alters the power relationship between social groups through the expression of ideology. Individuals or groups use discourse to create reality so as to protect power relations not to be challenged. The aim of CDA is to reveal such a correlation. The correlation of Discourse, Ideology, and Power can be illustrated by the figure below:

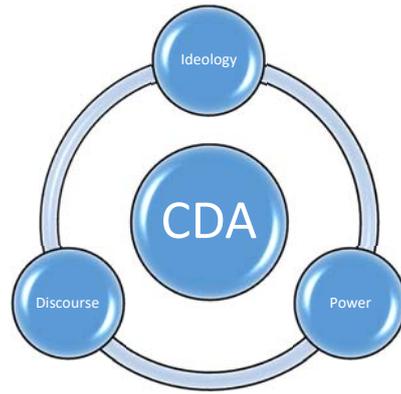


Figure 1.1 Correlation of Discourse, Ideology, and Power

The task of CDA is to deconstruct the work of representation; to elucidate the dialectic relationship between micro-events (verbal realizations, discourse strategy) and macro structures (power structure) in society; to expose inequality and injustice; to uncover the ideological markers within the structures of the language discourse and how social events contribute to shaping ideologies within the discourse. Van Dijk (2000) confirms that in order to achieve this aim, one of the main requirements of CDA is to focus on “the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society” (p. 353). Later, Van Dijk adds that CDA “provides a sociological account of language use because of its interest in ideology, social relations, and the relationship between text and context” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 37). As a result, CDA deals with language use as a social practice that shapes ideologies within discourse; uncovers the dialectic relationship between discourse, power, ideology, and the influential role that language plays in the emanation of power and legitimizing social inequalities.

#### 1.2.5 Synergy of CDA and CL (*Corpus Linguistics*)

The criticisms against CDA have focused on its methodological weakness, mainly due to its qualitative approach to linguistic analysis. Its analysis can be said to be overtly biased. CDA inevitably encapsulates the description of detailed linguistic features and involves the analysis of the linguistic realizations in a quantitative level. In order to limit bias, researchers are thus forced to confront realities of frequency or saliency. The synergy of CDA and CL are advocated in response to this criticism. The availability of powerful personal computers and large amounts of electronic texts has made corpus linguistics an increasingly popular method. In the science of language, a corpus is a body of written text or transcribed speech which can serve as a basis

for linguistic analysis and description (Kennedy, 2010). Corpus linguistics is the empirical study of language based on examples of real life language use (McEnery and Wilson, 1996) which relies heavily on corpora from which generalizations about language can be made. It investigates various linguistic phenomena from the corpus, identifying “probabilities, trends, patterns, co-occurrences of elements, features or groupings of features” (Teubert and Krishnamurthy, 2007, p. 6). Such calculations are often based on frequency information, sometimes with attendant statistical tests, though they can also involve presenting data in particular ways that make it easier for human beings to identify linguistic patterns (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b). The advantages of the corpus-based approach are that, claimed by Baker, the larger amount of data being studied means that any findings are more credible than those based on a handful of examples, thus making the corpus-based approach much more objective.

The main weakness for which CL is often criticized is that it neglects the socio-cultural context of discourse owing to the large size of data, since the texts that constitute a corpus are invariably decontextualized examples of language use (Baker, 2006). CL can only ever reveal its own contents within that corpus (Baker, 2004). A pure corpus analysis is, therefore, often said to lack explanatory and interpretive power since in-depth exploration of context is usually not feasible with a large corpus.

In recent literature, there have been more and more voices advocating the synergy of critical discourse analysis and corpus approach as they are complementary to each other. The reason is that the marriage of the two could overcome the shortcomings of each other. CDA pays attention to both the macro-level of unveiling the discourses and representations through a top-down approach, and the micro-level by analysing how discourse is discursively constructed; a corpus-based approach can deal with both the large scale of texts as well as the detailed information. In this way, the combined approach of CDA and CL is effective to reveal the power structure and the hidden ideology from the constructed representation of women in the four historical eras.

### **1.3 Research rationale and questions**

To better examine women’s representation in *Shen Bao* and *People’s Daily* in the four distinctive eras, this thesis sets out to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) How are women represented in *Shen Bao* and *People ' s Daily*? What are the most prevailing public and domestic roles of women discursively constructed in *Shen Bao* and *People ' s Daily* from 1872 to 2012?
- 2) How has women's representation changed across the four historical eras?
- 3) What are the tensions between these different presentations across historical eras?

No previous studies compared the transformation and continuity of women's representations over such a long period of time in Chinese modern history. Research questions formulated, the next section moves to the key theories and methods adopted.

#### **1.4 Thesis structure**

This thesis is structured in nine chapters. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction and lays the groundwork for this thesis. It first presents the main goal that this study intends to achieve, which is to explore women's representation in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949) and *People ' s Daily* (1950-2012) in China over a time period of 140 years (1872-2012). This is followed by the research questions. Then it moves to the key theories and methods adopted by this thesis to examine the impact of power and ideology on shaping women's representations in the two newspapers. Finally, chapter 1 is concluded with the thesis structure.

Chapter 2 critically reviews the relevant literature and establishes the theoretical framework. It begins with brief discussions on the key concepts in this field of Women's Studies. It moves to the underpin the role of media as a central force in constructing women's representation, together with the impact of power and ideology in shaping women's representations in *Shen Bao* (1872-1949) and *People ' s Daily* (1950-2012). Previous research concerning the media's representation of women is also provided. Then, Women's Studies in China and representations of women in China are also reviewed.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology adopted -- the synergy of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL). Then sets out details of the methods and procedures used in this study, including the sampling strategy, data collection instruments, depiction of the data sets, and the data analysis software and techniques.

Chapter 4 provides the historical cultural and social background for the four eras spanning 140 years. It presents the context to position women in the media. In each historical era, key events

and dominant ideologies relevant to the exploration of Chinese women's representation are discussed.

Chapter 5 to Chapter 8 are core chapters that analyse women's representations in the four historical eras: Chapter 5 Late Qing Era (1872-1911); Chapter 6 Republican Era (1912 – 1949); Chapter 7 Socialist Era (1950 – 1978); Chapter 8 Post-Socialist Era (1979 – 2012) respectively. In each era, critical explanation of women's representation is provided, describing and interpreting the data, analysing women's roles depicted in the newspapers, discussing the results and summarizing findings in that time period.

Chapter 9 takes the discussion further across the four eras, synthesizing the analysis and discussing the findings. All research questions are answered. A set of concluding statements are offered; and contributions of this research is highlighted. Finally, limitations and reflections are pointed out, and based on the findings, recommendations for further research are provided.

## Chapter 2 Women in the Media

This chapter critically reviews the relevant literature and establishes the theoretical framework for this research in five sections. The first section, **Women's Studies**, provides a brief account of the key concepts in this field, beginning with a discussion on the difference between the concepts of *sex* and *gender*. These concepts are paramount in the field of women's studies because they suggest that women were deemed inferior to men were nothing more than the result of social constructions. The second section, **Women and Media**, offers theoretical background to research on women's representation in the media, and explains the role of media as a central force in constructing representation of women. Then, the section examines the impact of power and ideology in shaping women's representations in *Shen Bao* (1872–1949) and *People's Daily* (1950–2012) and discusses previous research concerning the media's representation of women. Section three, **Women's Studies in China**, approaches women's studies in China from the perspectives of globalization and localization. Section four, **Representations of Women in China**, discusses the media's representation of women in the Chinese context. Section five concludes this chapter and introduces Chapter 3, the research methodology.

### 2.1 Women's Studies

To address women's representation in the context of media discourse, it is important to first discuss the concepts of sex and gender. In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir argued in her book, *The Second Sex*, that being a woman is not a way in which “one is born, but rather something one becomes” (Beauvoir 1949, p. 14). She claimed that females are socially constructed as women, and that possessing feminine gender is a process that one acquires, learns and adopts. Later, Robert Stoller in his book, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, restricted the term sex to a “biological connotation”, and referred to gender as having “psychological or cultural rather than biological connotations” (Stoller, 1984, p. 9) that can be further divided into two components: gender identity and gender role. Money and Ehrhardt (1972) claimed that the relationship between sex and gender is not relevant at all, arguing that sex is based on biology, but gender is composed of sets of roles and functions, ways of thinking,

and social interactions. In addition, Money referred to gender as cues from social roles or ways of thinking related to gender, and gender identity is encrypted in these cues. In this way, the main focus of this study, women's representation in two newspapers in four distinctive historical periods in China, can be understood as finding the gender cues, which are commonly accepted in society as symbols of being a woman. Other scholars, however, have argued that gender is not independent of sex but flows directly from it (Warnke, 2011). For example, Butler (1988) denied that gender is constructed based on the biological attributes contributing to the concept of sex, criticizing the way that the two genders were distinguished and defined through repeated behaviours while ignoring individuality and uncertainty. According to Butler, gender is determined by the acquired social law (the accepted norms, conduct codes etc.). People are expected to act according to the law. Through these endlessly repeated performative acts, the social law is reinforced. Butler used the notion of "performativity" to refer to this process. For Butler, the distinction between the personal and the political or between private and public is itself a fiction designed to support an oppressive status quo: our most personal acts are, in fact, continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies. Butler believes that gender is the result of the neoglaciation of various discourse systems, but because the process of this interaction is always ongoing, and gender is also an ongoing process (Butler, 1990).

Although scholars have taken different perspectives on the relationship between sex and gender, their conceptualizations share some common ground—gender is not something that people are born with, but something that is socially constructed. Generally, sex is considered the fundamental biological differentiator between human beings, and not something that is later constructed or cultivated. On the other hand, gender is considered to be related to one's biological sex but is not determined by it. Human beings acquire gender related to sex based on social institutions and cultural conventions, the "social law" as noted by Butler (2004), that cultivates, shapes, and defines gender. From this, it can be recognized that gendered behaviour is not simply an expression of sex categories—related to the term "sex roles"—but a socially-constructed set of practices layered on top of a crude biological base.

Scholars in the field of women's studies have placed emphasis on how the sex and gender relationship positions women as an inferior group to men, persistently pursuing the question of the distribution of power between genders, among ethnic groups, sexualities, and classes. Rubin (1975) expressed more explicitly that gender pertains to people's roles and functions in

the societies and cultures that they are a part of. Regardless of cultural differences, women tend to become “domesticated women” or subordinate to men. This situation is not the result of differences in biology, intellect, or psychology between sexes, but the result of history, culture, society, and economy that favours male dominance. However, postmodern scholars contest this distinction by arguing that sex and biology are both shaped by sociological practices. Nevertheless, the concepts of sex and gender are paramount in the field of women’s studies, because these concepts suggest that deeming women inferior to men was the result of social constructions.

An anthology called *Kvinnors Liv och Arbete* (Women’s Lives and Work) published in 1962, later translated into English in a revised edition as *The Changing Roles of Men and Women* (Dahlström, 1971) marked that “gender equality” became a gender discourse instead of a political discourse (Ahlberg, Roman and Duncan, 2008). In 1971, the Norwegian researcher Harriet Holter published her book, *Sex Roles and Social Structure*, which marked the transition from sex role research in education to a more comprehensive view of gender as a social structure in society (Holter, 1971). These pioneer scholars tried to understand why women are oppressed and how male dominance can be changed. This view of gender as a social structure is closely related to feminist movements in the fight for equal rights between genders, such as suffrage, education, pay, work opportunities and so on, forming a solid historical foundation and theoretical background for the later women’s movement and women’s studies as a discipline.

Women’s studies grew out of a lack of gender equality in higher education and society. Women’s studies originated as a discipline at universities in all five Nordic countries during the 1970s and 1980s. Later, all over the world, women’s studies came out of social movements fighting for equal rights for women. Over time, the focus of women’s studies has changed, and now concentrates more on gender as a social structure in society and trying to understand the origins and continuing nature of women’s devaluation in society. Scholars in this field believe that women’s experiences, concerns, and ideas are as valuable as those of men and should be treated with equal seriousness and respect, placing women at the centre of theoretical analysis, and giving women a voice in research. Scholars in the field of women’s studies treat gender, sexuality and the experience of women as a primary category of societal organization, and focus on the construction of gender roles in society and how the construction of gender roles holds certain power establishments in place (Anderson, 1993).

Since the 1970s, it has been widely accepted in the field of women's studies that present gender inequalities are not just the result of traditional norms and old prejudice. Rather, gender inequality is being reproduced in modern settings again and again. It is argued that the oppressed position of women in patriarchal societies has been reproduced and maintained by the aid of ideological practice via media (Sultana, 2012). Van Zoonen points out that the "women's movement is not only engaged in a material struggle about equal rights and equal opportunities for women, but also in a symbolic conflict about definitions of women" (Zoonen, 1994, p. 12). Influenced by these feminist thoughts, scholars started to interpret gender-related asymmetries in the field of language as expressions of the linguistic discrimination of women and forged links directly to the issues of social discrimination (Wodak, 1997). Studies of media's representation have also been conducted to discover how gender portrayals in the media function to impose the dominant ideology (Grossberg and Treichler, 1987). Hence, one of the most valuable contributions of this thesis is the analysis of women's representation, discussing the hidden dominant ideology, and unveiling the power structures concealed and disseminated through media.

As previously discussed, Money and Ehrhardt defined (1972) gender as cues from social roles or ways of thinking related to gender. How do women access these gender cues? Media is the palpable answer. Media is a social mechanism that facilitates the production and dissemination of gender cues, thus providing the necessary resources for the construction of women's representation. The next section, **Women and Media**, positions women in the context of mass media.

## **2.2 Women and Media**

This section is presented in three parts. The first part, *Constructed Reality*, expounds on the role of media as the central force in constructing women's representations. The second part, *Ideology and Power*, discusses the impact of power and ideology in shaping women's representations. The third part, *Women's Representation in the Media*, examines previous research in the context of the media's presentation of women.

### *2.2.1 Constructed Reality*

People live in different sociocultural societies and do not have the same experiences in life. As a result, people do not share the same social view, nor do they have access to the same kinds

of knowledge about the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The world is a socially constructed reality where people make sense of it from their culture, experience and knowledge, and each person has a unique interpretation. Human behaviour is stimulated by the person's own understanding and then is acted upon in the real world. Therefore, constructed reality not only affect people's cognition and behaviour towards the real world, but also can impact on the real world by doing so. This is explained by Elder-Vass as "The way in which we collectively think and communicate about the world affects the way the world is" (2013, p. 4). As previously discussed, women access the socially constructed knowledge of being a woman, to learn how to be a woman accordingly.

How is social reality constructed? In 1966, sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote a book titled *The Social Construction of Reality*. They argued that society is created by humans and human interaction, and reality is socially constructed through communication (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Later, Foucault (1972) argued that the social world is shaped by discourse, while Butler (1990) considered that social reality is not a given but is continually created as an illusion "through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign" (p. 270). Furthermore, according to Fairclough (1996), discourses form the objects, or constitute these objects, and it is through discourses and the "regimes of truth" they create that the social production of meaning takes place and power relations are preserved. Other scholars have accentuated the dialectical relation of discourse with society and see discourse as a form of social practice that is both socially constitutive and socially constituted; in other words, "the discursive event is shaped by the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) but it also shapes them" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258).

Media discourse is a way of talking about and acting upon the world which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices (Gunnarsson, 1997, p. 202). The vast majority of people can only understand the world through the feeding agencies like media. These feeding agencies have ideological or political stances, which will affect their representation of the world. This symbolic or reflected world is "the constructed reality". This subjective reality is based on and deviates from the truth, showing the selected, processed, reconstructed environment through mass media to the public; and is formed on the foundation of people's knowledge, which, to a large extent, is mediated by the media. According to Fairclough (1992), the media apply the ideational function of language as a way of constructing a social reality. The power of media discourse lies to a large extent in its potential to create, shape and

consolidate people's ideas of events happening beyond their immediate experience (Kopytowska, 2016). The media does not simply recount events; media also interprets and explains them in an attempt to influence the audience (Cao, 2014). Consequently, the media's ability to define issues, topics and situations gives them ideological power (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

This thesis examines the media's representation of women in terms of how it constructs women's roles and defines what it means to be a woman. After discussing the important role that media plays in constructing women's representation, the next section, *Ideology and Power*, answers what do the media imbue and disseminate with its representation of women?

### 2.2.2 *Ideology and Power*

Marx and Engels (1970, p. 13) defined ideology as the "production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness" within class struggle and domination, and that the main function of ideology was to legitimize the hegemonic order. This concept of ideology is productive insofar as it shows that social power operates throughout every cultural realm of society. When the ideology is of the ruling class, it is thus regarded as the dominant ideology (Wemyss, 2016, p. 10). In this sense, the notion of ideology was used to describe the process through which the dominant ideas within a given class reflect the interests of a ruling economic class.

Later, between 1929 to 1935, Antonio Gramsci propounded the idea of cultural hegemony theory during his imprisonment throughout his series of essays, *Quaderni del Carcere, Prison Notebooks*. Cultural hegemony refers to the dominant ideology and major institution which represents the ruling class's interest and benefit that exerts its influence through the manufacture of consent. Gramsci perceived ideology as a determining factor within the society-power nexus, inevitably in the service of the ruling class (Gramsci, 2014). Hegemony is achieved by controlling cultural content and establishing customs and traditions and is exercised through spontaneous consent of the masses. Gramsci points out that hegemony not only describes the activities of the ruling class but also the process by which social groups come to gain power to lead, and how they expand their power and maintain it. The valuable contribution made by the cultural hegemony theory is the attention to hegemonic power as an often-implicit "common sense", by continual repetition, for example gender acts, in the most mundane of daily activities. It is the embodiment of hegemony that influences and permeates in everyday common sense, through the mundane activities that secure the consent of all the

subaltern classes. Hegemony cannot be reduced to domination or manipulation, rather hegemony indicates consensual relationships among groups or classes whereby one sector represents and leads others. Subordinate and allied groups and classes receive material, political, and cultural benefits as they adhere to the hegemonic relationship (Artz and Murphy, 2000). Gramsci claimed that publishing, including broadcasting, newspapers and magazines, was the most feasible and effective means of maintaining, protecting and developing the ideology of the ruling class. He considered that language, ideology, and communication was significantly instrumental in establishing hegemonic leadership. Consequently, the ruling class has more than the economic base, but is also in control of ideas, theories and values, that is, the superstructure of society as in Marx's notion.

Althusser built on the work of Gramsci to understand the way ideology functions in society, and applied ideology to understand the “constructed reality”—the world we construct around us after our entrance into the symbolic order (Althusser, 2020). According to Althusser, ideology does not “reflect” the real world but “represents” the “imaginary relationship of individuals” to the real world; the thing ideology represents is itself already once removed from reality. In other words, we are always within ideology because of our reliance on language to establish our reality; different ideologies are but different representations of our social and imaginary reality, not a representation of reality itself.

Althusser (2020) categorized politics and ideology into a superstructure and created two definitions respectively: Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). RSAs function as a unified entity or an institution, for example, government, courts, police and armed forces. ISAs however, are ultimately controlled by the ruling ideology. The distinction between RSAs and ISAs is its' primary function in society: respectively, the administration of violent repression and the dissemination of ideology. The majority of people accept their ideological self-constitution as reality or nature, and thus rarely run afoul of RSAs, which are designed to punish anyone who rejects the dominant ideology. Hegemony is thus reliant less on RSAs such as the police than it is on those ISAs by which ideology is inculcated in all subjects. As Althusser (2001) stated:

the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection all by himself (p. 182).

In 1969, the same year that Althusser completed his book *On Ideology*, Foucault published his book, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, as the foundation of his discourse theory (Foucault, 2002). In this book, Foucault argued that discursive practices are the events and result of the physical world. Fairclough used the theoretical terms ideology and hegemony as a way to theorize changes in power relations in society (Fairclough, 1996). Hegemony, in Fairclough's understanding, is power over society as a whole, but it is never achieved more than partially and is more about winning consent through ideological means than about dominating. Hegemonic struggles, therefore, take place on a broad front in society, and discursive changes have their roots in these hegemonic struggles, where uneven power relations are located. Fairclough used Althusser's concept of interpellation—the idea that the individual internalizes values and ideologies from the surrounding society and acts upon them—to explain how ideology constitutes the subject (Fairclough, 1992).

It is also worth mentioning that patriarchy is a form of hegemony. Walby (1989) defines patriarchy as representing social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Besides reproducing and exerting male dominance over women, patriarchy defines the roles of women and provides a value paradigm for both men and women to follow. Images of women represented in the symbolic world of media often show beautiful and sensuous women, devoted and long-suffering mothers, and loyal housewives supporting husbands or looking after paralysed parents-in-law while keeping the house clean without complaint. These types of images are the most common kinds of female protagonists depicted in media, and the audience of this content will accept these representations of women as role models and follow the standard. The ideas imbued in these representations of women will become their own ideology. Hence, patriarchy, through media discourse, allows men to dominant women and to take advantage of women.

During times of drastic social change, the dominant ideology evolves or, in some cases, alters. Gramsci believed that this was a relatively dynamic process (Gramsci, 2014). Culture hegemony is not unitary; its internal structure is complicated. Dominant ideology is always questioned, influenced, justified, revised, updated, and reshaped. According to Gramsci, the ruling group divides into two: Organic Intellectuals and Traditional Intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals represent the continuity of history and adhere to the old cultural hegemony. In

contrast, organic intellectuals are aware of their responsibilities in the society and promote the new hegemony. The balance after the conflict and compromise, between the interests and benefit of the old and the new, is the new culture hegemony, that is, the new dominant ideology.

Later, works like *Language and Control* (Fowler, 1979), and *Language as Ideology* (Kress and Hodge, 1979), extended the discussion of ideology to the correlation with power. Discourse is a key tool in creating, reproducing and challenging power relations within society as it legitimates control or “naturalizes” the social order (Wodak, 2011, pp. 53–54). Generally speaking, the social group that is in power has more resources and capabilities to define and interpret the world. However, these defining and interpreting are all rooted from the interest of the ruling group to continue maintaining the power. This process of interpretation and definition is carried out through discourse construction because “power can be projected through the choices of linguistic resources in projecting meaning and social values” (Risdanaeva, 2018, p. 129). This, in turn, causes the powerless groups staying at the disadvantageous position and being defined. Thus, the social group that is in power continues to secure its advantageous position in power. Hence, discourse is power, media and ideology are intertwined, and media is a medium for disseminating the dominant ideology. Wodak (2011, p. 52) claims that the aim of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is “to demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies”. This study adopts CDA to reveal women’s representations and the dominant ideology hidden in *Shen Bao* and *People’s Daily* in four distinctive eras during 140 years of Chinese history. Over this time, China witnessed drastic sociocultural change, and changes in both ideology and hegemony as a result of different political groups coming into power. Fairclough sees the development of power relations as a hegemonic struggle (Fairclough, 1995). The discussion here has focussed on the effects that both hegemony and ideology had on the discourse surrounding women’s representation from 1782–2012. Therefore, CDA is the right tool to reveal inequality in the text together with the ideologies hidden behind the text, which is further discussed in Chapter 3. Now that media’s role and ideological hegemony have been explained, the next section answers how insofar women were depicted, and what hegemony was found hidden in media discourse?

### 2.2.3 *Women’s Representation in the Media*

It is generally acknowledged by scholars that the oppressed position of women has been reproduced and maintained by the aid of ideological practice via media. Women’s

representation in the media has been widely studied to interpret gender-related asymmetries in the field of language as expressions of the linguistic discrimination of women, and scholars have forged links directly between the media's representation of women to the issues of social discrimination (Wodak, 1997). Media provides gender cues with regard to women's representations and social roles, to reflect how society interprets the meaning of being a woman. As discussed above, the media disseminates ideology through its representations of women. Thus, exploring the representation of women in media is the first step and is of great importance. The next three sections look at the three major types of women's representation in the existing literature. These include: negative stereotyping; under-representation; and a phenomenon which the author of this research named "gender blame".

### Negative Stereotyping

Krishan and Dighe (1990) noted that women are portrayed in the media either in terms of traditional domestic roles or in terms of their sexual appeal to men. Tuchman, Daniels, and Benet (1978) noted that if the media portrays women, they are portrayed in traditional roles such as a housewife or mother, or, if they are in the paid workforce, in clerical or other "pink-collar" jobs. Correspondingly, there are few, if any, depictions of strong female characters in positions of responsibility or authority, even inside the home. These stereotyped images of women represented in the media limit and endanger women's social development and identity construction.

Anthropologist Emily Martin discovered in her research, *The egg and the sperm: how science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles*, that eggs were described as motherly or slutty with pejorative prosody (Martin, 1991). The "black widow" like egg was described as dangerous and passively waiting for the sperm, and menstruation was described as a failure, and a waste. Martin claimed that science is written by people, and therefore researchers will inevitably bring their cultural imprint in the process of interpreting scientific facts. Consequently, although we believe that science is objective, it is impossible for us to understand scientific facts without cultural bias (Martin, 1991).

Studies of the visual image of women portrayed in advertisements and women's magazines reveal women as "mother, housewife, sexually attractive women" (Winship, 1980), or as "commodity-object and as a negative sign in a male-dominated culture" (Butcher, 1974). More

recent studies have continued to investigate the image of women as wives and mothers in mass media (Lauzen, Dozier and Horan, 2008; Carlin and Winfrey, 2009). These representations of women foster gender inequality as females are commonly depicted as submissive beings that are perceived or portrayed as weak and as objects of sexuality (Wood, 1994).

The bulk of research into the effects of gender portrayal by the media has focused on the extent to which television viewing shapes gender role attitudes and behaviours in children. Signorielli (1993) noted that heavy television viewing in children and teens is associated with stereotyping of occupational roles and the identification by children of domestic chores as associated with either men or women along traditional lines. The media generally emphasize what is normal and acceptable in the modern world. Thus, a link between the growing incidences of eating disorders among young women and the media's presentation of a thinner female ideal through fashion models and female actors and dancers has been reported (Kilpela et al., 2015).

Gauntlett (2008) pointed out that representations of gender today are more complex and less stereotypical than in the past. In recent years, in television dramas or movies, women and men are seen working side by side, and heroines can even dominate the plot. Princesses in Disney cartoon movies are no longer waiting for a brave knight to rescue them. Likewise, in advertisements, women's representations are also more diverse. Furthermore, women are also now depicted in media as independent and confident, and as aspiring to pursue advanced education and career success. For example, in Baxter's (2009) study of the tv series *Sex and the City*, she found a clear "return" to the stereotypical feminine pleasures of dress, fashion, cosmetics, sexiness, and visual display; yet, the women were portrayed as professional and independent at the same time.

### Under-Representation

The book *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, comprised functionalism theory and introduced the concept of "symbolic annihilation," suggesting that women are "symbolized as child-like adornments who need to be protected or they are dismissed to the protective confines of the home" (Tuchman, Daniels and Benét, 1978, p. 8). Tuchman (2000) claimed that the mass media symbolically annihilates women by largely ignoring them or portraying them in stereotypical roles such as victims or consumers. Further, working women who are portrayed in the mass media are condemned, and other representations of women are

trivialized. United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee researched gender inequality in the media employment in the 1990s and found that when few women appear on screens, the range of roles occupied by women will be narrower than the range of roles occupied by their male counterparts (cited in Gallagher and Euler, 1995). In 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee published the research results on the current levels of representation of women in the international bodies, and found women are significantly underrepresented (Anon., United Nation, 2021). The non-profit feminist organization Media Watch ([www.mediawatch.com](http://www.mediawatch.com)) conducted a series of surveys on gender equality every year. It listed the following information on the website (Gallagher, 2002): “In 2000 the International Federation of Journalists carried out a survey covering 70% of its membership in 39 countries. Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) of the United Nations published a report (reference number EGM/MEDIA/2002/BP.1), stating that “it found that although more than a third of journalists are women, less than 3% of senior media executives and decision-makers are female. In the newly emerging media industries, the picture does not look much better. A study of the major telecommunications and e-companies in the USA established that only 13% of top executives are women and the European Union’s database on women in decision-making shows that in 2001, women held only 9% of senior management jobs in the telecommunications industry in Europe. (p.5)” The underrepresentation of women impacts on women’s entitlement of gender equality and non-discrimination.

### Gender Blame

Clark (1992) noted that in tabloid newspapers such as *The Sun*, female victims of sexual assault tended to be represented as being blamed for this type of attack. The phenomenon of female victims being blamed seems to be shaped by the views put forward by Spender (1985) who argued that the world is viewed from the male point of view because language is dominated by men. Male dominance of the language infers that the media tend to use language in a “patriarchal order” which is stereotypical in Western society (Simpson, 1993). In this patriarchal order, men are viewed as more influential than women which results in control over the type of language used. Furthermore, this patriarchal order indicates that women should follow what men want and are represented in ways that are favoured by men (Risidaneva, 2018).

In Chinese culture and literature, Chinese women have been blamed for the empire's demise or the emperor's mistakes. A special idiom "Hóngyán huòshuǐ Helen of Troy, Beautiful women are dangerous" was created to refer to this phenomenon. XiMei in the Xia Dynasty, DaJi in the Shang Dynasty, BaoSi in the Zhou Dynasty, Yang Yuhuan in the Tang Dynasty, and Chen Yuanyuan in the Ming Dynasty, and so forth, are all examples of the emperor's favourite concubine being blamed for the dynasty's demise. Edwards (2000) stated that "Chinese women were traditionally credited with responsibility for saving or destroying the nation" (p. 125). The male literati believed that Chinese women had nothing but beauty, and they only knew how to use their beauty to bewitch the emperor. Furthermore, the male literati believed that the emperors were so enchanted by women's beauty that they ignored the government and management of the empire, which led to the decline and eventual destruction of the country. The author of this study names this phenomenon "gender blame", which is not unusual in various cultures in history, and defines this phenomenon as blaming women for failures or wrongs that are not women's fault. In fact, it is the idea that men are superior to women that caused this phenomenon. The issue of gender blame is also further discussed later in Chapter 5 with examples from this thesis.

These sections have discussed how ideology is encoded in language and then disseminated through media discourse. Media as the "subject to production, reproduction and transformation of hegemony" (Strinati, 2004, p. 168), are the institutions that "not only reflected and sustained the consensus" but also "helped produce consensus and manufactured consent" (Hall, 1982, p. 86), and act as an important tool to establish and maintain hegemony. Gender inequality is the inevitable result in a patriarchal society.

### **2.3 Women's Studies in China**

Since this study examines women's representation in China, this section contextualises the significance of the emergence of women's movements and the discipline of women's studies in China. Owing to China's unique historical and sociocultural background, the emergence and development of women's studies was different in comparison to Western countries. The first part of this section, *Globalization Perspective*, discusses the development of women's studies in China from a globalization perspective, expounding on how theories from the West shaped and influenced women's studies in China. The second part, *Localization Perspective*, takes a localization perspective, discussing how Western theories are localized and interplayed in the

Chinese context. Altogether, this section, **Women's Studies in China**, provides contextual understanding of theories in the field of women's studies to examine women's representation in China.

### 2.3.1 *Globalization Perspective*

In the late Qing era, the introduction of science and technology from the West also brought in Western ideologies such as Marxism, socialism, feminism, anarchism and gender equality. Due to the unique political system in China, the women's emancipation movement did not rise from a "bottom-up" women's movement, but rather from radical social revolution and top-down legal and administrative reforms, as if it was a kind of "favour" granted to women (Lin, 2008). In the Republican era, women, as the privileged symbol of the modern Chinese nation, were utilized to resolve national predicaments such as political instability, economic disarray, and social disorder. As such, in the Republican era, women's rights were a cause that was indissolubly linked with, yet subordinate to and defined by, the interests of the nation. In the socialist era, any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006), and was treated either as "shameful expressions of a warped mind (p.15)" or as "evidence of bourgeois individualism and are thus detrimental to the collective welfare (p. 16)" (Evans, 1997). During this era, the idea of women as a gendered group was annihilated (Yang, 1999). Instead, women as a social class were integrated into the working class, so that the women's liberation movement could be integrated into the national movement. In the post-socialist era, after Chinese economic reform and opening-up together with the exchanges and collisions between Chinese and Western ideas that women's studies once again emerged, and attracted more extensive and deeper attention from the academic community and even the whole of society (Xu, 2015).

In 1987, the *Study of a Woman* by Honore de Balzac was translated into Chinese by Fu Lei (1908–1966) et al. and published by Hunan People's Publishing House, which introduced the concept of women's studies to Chinese academic circles for the first time. In 1988, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* by Margaret Mead was translated by Song Jian et al. and published by Zhejiang People's Publishing House, bringing the perspective of gender to China. In that same year, publications such as the *Development of Women's Ideology* by Du Fangqin, *Secret Sacred Fire – Social History of Sex* by Pan Suiming, *Exploration of Eve – Essays on Women's Studies* by Li Xiaojiang, and the *Study of Women Theories* by the Research

Office of Beijing Women's Federation were regarded as the earliest research outputs from the field of women's studies in China (Tan, 1995). According to Wang Zheng (2005), contemporary Chinese feminism emerged in the 1980s in the post-socialist era, and the prime mover in the effort of the development of women's studies was the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), the largest non-government organization of women's organizations in China. The "state feminism" noted by Wang in the socialist era not only fundamentally broke from the practice of the women's emancipation movement in China before 1949, but also detached itself from the globalization process of importing the theories and practices from the West (Wang, 2005). Women's studies, although still in its infancy, has continued to flourish since the end of the 1980s. Women's studies as an academic discipline has been established in universities and institutions and has focussed on theorizing the practices of previous women's movements in China. After the Fourth World Women's Conference in 1995, with the importation of gender theories from the West, applying these newly imported theories to analyse Chinese women's issues, together with constructing indigenous theories have become an important feature of women's studies in China.

One of the most significant features of the discipline of women's studies in China is the scarcity of indigenous theory in relation to gender (Song, 2011). The Chinese academia failed to theorize from the practice and experience of Chinese women's movements. Mi Ruixin claimed this is partly because of the international hegemonic academic structure, and that the so called "Western theories, Chinese Practise" is caused by the view that the West has completed the creation of theory, while China only needs to apply it (cited in Song, 2011, p. 146). However, other scholars argue that academic hegemony aside, the scarcity of indigenous gender theories in China can be explained by the following three main reasons:

- 4) Researches in women's studies mainly emphasizes the class attribute of women instead of women's gender attribute after 1949, that is the false belief that the success of class struggle will bring women's equal rights, which caused its incapability in generating theories.
- 5) There was a lack of research summarizing theories on the women's movements in China especially in the socialist and post-socialist eras. This small amount of prospective research on women's issues was unable to generate theories to guide the discipline. Although the women's movements in China achieved certain successes, it failed to produce a feasible theoretical framework to guide future researches in the discipline in China.
- 6) Early research in women's studies was largely concentrated within women's organizations, and no effective socialized and professional women's research mechanism formed in the wider society.

As discussed above, theories of women's studies that originated in the West are not entirely suitable for analysing women's issues in China due to differences in culture, tradition and history. These Western ideas on gender and femininity are reformulated, rearticulated, and re-contextualized in Chinese terms. It should be mentioned that one of the powerful forces behind this re-contextualization is of course the political and sociocultural context within China and the unique historical time period itself. The next part below discusses how Western theories are localized and interplayed in the Chinese context.

### 2.3.2 *Localization Perspective*

As discussed above, some scholars believe that the scarcity of indigenous theories in China in the field of women's studies is the result of being limited, marginalized, and colonized by the well-developed, well-financed Western counterpart (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004). One of the major achievements of the field of women's studies in China is the localization (本土běntǔ/本土化běntǔ huà) of western theories in Chinese terms. "Localization" employed here refers to a practical process in which Western theories are adapted in China according to the ideology, economy, culture, history, and gender status, of which indigenous resources in China is one of the key concepts to understanding this localization process. Bentu (indigenous) refers to studies originating in China in contrast to those coming from outside (wailai), and uses bentuhua (literally, to make it indigenous) to refer to the process of critically applying overseas scholarship in the Chinese context (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004). On one hand, the so-called indigenous resources refer to the ideological and cultural traditions and customs inherited throughout Chinese history; on the other hand, indigenous resources refer to the local experience and practices, that is, the experience accumulated before China was introduced to Western theories (i.e., before China's hosted the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in 1995).

After China reopened itself to the outside world and the growing economy greatly accelerated academic exchanges and co-operation between Chinese scholars and their counterparts from other countries, Chinese scholars of women's studies felt an urgent need to find out more about Western theories. In the context of China's unique history and cultural values as well as economic and political systems, Chinese scholars tried to seek the local or indigenous roots of women's studies through the process of applying the results of research from overseas in the Chinese context. The journal *Collection of Women's Studies* founded in 1992, has played a

significant role in propelling studies of women's theory with Chinese characteristics, promoting theoretical innovation of women's studies, and giving guidance on practices of women's development. As Welland (2006) claims, some Chinese scholars have already worked to pursue new research agendas concerning a profound examination of new problems faced by women in contemporary Chinese society and the integration of global women's studies theories into China's own social and economic development. Examples of publications reflecting new research agendas include *Eve's Exploration* (1988) and *The Way for Women – to Chinese Women in the Second Half of 20th Century* (1989) by Li Xiaojiang, *Historical and Cultural Trace of Social Gender in China* (1998) by Du Fangqing, and *Rise of Women's Power* (2003) by Li Yinhe.

Indigenous theories consider women's studies as a discipline to study the theory and knowledge system concerning the nature and characteristics of women (Du, 2013). However, indigenous theories have not played a sufficient role in promoting the development of the field as hoped. The field of women's studies has been driven forward by imported and localized Western theories. Learning from others does not equate to throwing away China's own knowledge, but to assemble, graft, and create indigenous theories to solve China's own problems. Furthermore, the ultimate aim of localization should be providing knowledge and experience to the world (Du, 2019). While localization helps to illustrate the dynamics of local and global exchanges of theories, the indigenous theories and the imported theories should not be dichotomized and essentialized. To date, the two areas that have been most localized are the Western gender theories and the Marxist perspective on Women, which are expounded respectively below.

### Western Gender Theories

Gender, as the most important conceptual framework and analytical category of women's studies, has been imported into China since the early 1990s, mostly translated as *social gender* (社会性别 shèhuì xìngbié). Among various versions of translation, 社会性别 shèhuì xìngbié has been widely accepted in the academic world. This semantic difference of various translations of gender into Chinese is an important clue to the ideological distinction being made between Western feminist studies and the more socialist attempts to study women. Chinese academia agrees that gender theories explore women as an oppressed group—the history of women, the current status of women and how to change women's status as being oppressed. The discipline of women's studies considers gender as a new perspective for

investigation and as a tool for analysis. The most important contribution of gender theory is that it not only regards women and gender as a social-cultural construction, or views women in isolation, but also regards women and gender as the result of the interplay between all levels of social power. Western gender theory and the subsequent gender difference theories emphasize the complex cross-disciplinary nature of gender and breakthrough the dichotomy of sex/sexuality and gender. Western gender theories bring a gender perspective to social science as a whole. According to Hershatter and Wang (2008), the main thrust of gender studies (shèhuì xìngbié xué) is to analyse the social system of gender, the social relations of gender and the relationship between the two genders. The localization of these theories in research and teaching is still an unanswered question.

However, scholars such as Li Xiaojiang from the Gender Research Centre of Dalian University advocate translating gender into 性别 xìngbié rather than ‘social gender’ (社会性别 shèhuì xìngbié) on the basis of two reasons (Li, 2005, pp. 167–169). First, the translation of social gender has concealed human nature and humanity. Promoting only the social aspect of gender is neither scientific nor superfluous. Interpreted from the contemporary Chinese lexis, xìng (性) is natural, biological and even human; while xìngbié (性别 gender) is a social symbol of identity, and a basic component of social order in the Chinese culture. Second, although “social gender is still closely related to biological gender, with the Chinese people’s understanding of Marxist materialism, any gender, man or woman, is a social being that is determined by the (societal) environment” (Li and Tan, 1991, p. 147). Therefore, Li and Tan argued that translating gender into ‘social gender’ excludes biological nature. Instead, ‘gendered 有性的’ and ‘gender analysis 性别分析’ include the underlying meaning, which not only have a greater connotation than social gender, but also differentiates gender from feminism, that is, not a political position, but a perspective, value and view of the world that transcends any political position.

Another contested term is “feminism”, which was introduced in China by the May Fourth Movement in 1919 during the Republican era. Feminism is mostly translated in Chinese as 女性主义 Nǚxìng zhǔyì or 女权主义 nǚquán zhǔyì. Feminism was considered politically incorrect after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came into power in the socialist era (Croll, 1983; Evans, 1997). Feminism is considered politically incorrect in the socialist era because feminism is considered a term that was prevalent in America, which is also loaded with

problems of capitalist society due to its lack of class struggle awareness. In the post-socialist period with the “return of gender” (which will be discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 8) and the rise of women’s studies, how to incorporate feminism into the theoretical framework of women’s studies is the biggest dilemma.

### Marxist Perspective on Women

Besides the localization of the terms “gender” and “feminism”, the Marxist perspective on women (Mǎkèsī Fùnǚ guān) is not only the theoretical foundation of the state ideology and political discourse on women in communist China, but also the guiding principle for everyday practices supporting women’s liberation. The Marxist perspective on women emerged in the Republican era and was developed by the CCP based on its experiences, practices and assumptions about women, for example, ‘women are great labour’ and ‘women are great revolutionary force’. In the socialist era when the CCP came into power, a Marxist-centred women’s liberation movement was formally institutionalized, which in nature, was an integration of CCP ideological policies of women that were rooted in three sources: the May Fourth Movement, Marxist-Engels’ critique of the family, and the nationalist discourse (Gilmartin, 1995). However, due to the “gender annihilation” in relation to the socialist practise of repressing femininity, the term put forth by Yang (1999), in the socialist era (refer to Chapter 4 and Chapter 7), femininity or any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006). Further discussions on gender annihilation are in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7. It was not until the post-socialist era that the Marxist perspective on women was promoted, in response to the inundation and dissemination of Western gender theories (Tang, 2011); and “has been used to serve the political interest of the CCP in keeping women’s concerns under control of the state and party in various socio-political circumstances at different historical times (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004, p. 175)”.

The Marxist perspective on women finds the roots of women’s subordination and oppression in private ownership and the class system, and considers that public ownership, state power, women’s participation in production outside the home, and collectivizing housework are the necessary conditions for eradicating the roots of women’s oppression and realizing human liberation (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004). Furthermore, the Marxist perspective on women specifies that the path to women’s liberation begins with a proletariat class struggle for the realization of socialism and communism. This includes setting up women’s organizations

under CCP leadership and addressing women's needs and interests so as to mobilize women to participate in the revolutionary struggles.

Against this historical context, women scholars and activists in China began to critically examine the CCP's theoretical and practical approaches to women (Zhou and Zhang, 2008; Dai, 2018; Song, 2013b). The Marxist perspective on women is the officially designated theoretical framework in terms of politics and ideology in China. Hence, discourse concerning women, is a state-sponsored topic, which is secondary to state discourse. In addition, in the academic world, the Marxist perspective on women must be the basic theory and the guiding principle of women's studies, as Chinese leaders, government policies and publications assert that the Marxist perspective on women must be the guiding theory of women's studies in China. For example, in 1990, Jiang Zemin, the President of People's Republic of China at the time, called for "the whole party and the whole society should possess the Marxist perspective on women" at the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the March 8th Women's Day. Consequently, the ACWF, under the control of CCP, has legitimized this official theoretical position academically and mainstreamed it into everyday discourse and practice. However, the Marxist perspective on women is inadequate in guiding the women's movement, solving women's issues, or theorizing the discipline of women's studies. This is because it lacks a gender perspective, and instead focuses on the class struggle and national discourse.

On the 14 July 2010 at the symposium of "The Difference Between Socialist Women's Liberation Movement and Western Feminism Movement: Theory and Practice", Mi Ruixin, the chief editor of the *Journal of Women's Studies*, the leading academic journal in China in the field, claimed that there were not many articles on socialist women's emancipation nor on the Marxist perspective on Women (cited in Song, 2011). During her speech, Mi pointed out the status quo concerning the lack of theories in the field and called for scholars' attention on theory development in China. She further suggested that articles relating to socialist women's emancipation and the Marxist perspective on Women are scarce, among which are mostly general related to gender theories. These articles lack the Marxist political perspective, nor deeply analyse the specific social-historical context of China, far from summarizing indigenous theories. In addition, she pointed out that in the majority of articles, only the famous words of well-known socialist thinkers in China, like Fourier (1772-1837, philosopher, influential early socialist thinker and one of the founders of utopian socialism) and Engels (1820-1895, philosopher, political theorist and revolutionary socialist) are quoted, and that they lack the

basic knowledge and understanding of Western feminism and even socialist feminist theories. Mi further argued that the Marxist perspective on women, as with the rest of the classical Marxist theories, has a similar status quo in China. Although Marxism is officially regarded as the guiding ideology in China, in actual research, including women's studies, the Marxist perspective on women is shelved and bypassed, and it is debatable whether Marxism is even the mainstream ideology in post-socialist China. Scholars believe that there is a chasm between the official guidance and the practice (Bai, Zhong, and Wang, 2001; Chow et al., 2004).

While Marxism is the theoretical mainstay of almost all disciplines in Chinese academia (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004), the introduction of Western feminist theories has created tension with the official Marxist line in balancing theories imported from the West with indigenous thinking and practice in China. The rise of women's studies in China came at a time when feminism was deemed politically and ideologically incorrect, and therefore needed to be silenced in academia. The CCP has always emphasized women's participation in the national revolution and pursuing women's liberation as part of the liberation process of the whole nation. It has always stressed that Chinese women have two goals, one is women's liberation, and the other is the whole nation's liberation. Therefore, the union of the national liberation movement and the women's movement is what distinguishes the women's movement in China from the Western feminist movement. In 1984, Li Xiaojiang published her paper titled *Human Progress and Women's Liberation*. In her paper, Li points out the limitations of the Marxist perspective on women: (i) gender should be separated from class struggle, gender precedes class, and class liberation does not necessarily lead to women's liberation, (ii) Marxist productivity theory cannot explain women's state of being oppressed. Li was hugely criticized by the older generation of women's liberation activists as promoting feminism in China under the influence of the West (this is an accusation, not praise in the Chinese cultural context). Later, Zhang Naihua commented on the silent tension between western feminism and the CCP's Marxist perspective on women. She believes that the reason feminism failed to develop in China is because national liberation has been granted priority over women's liberation (cited in Song, 2011, p. 147).

Western gender theories and the Marxist perspective on women are the two most active areas within the discipline of women's studies in China. The former considers gender as one of the most important variables in explaining social phenomena and behaviour, and the power relations between gender as the root of inequality. The latter advocates radical transformation

of gender relations as an integral part of the realization of a socialist society. The former emphasizes the practicality of being a woman, while the latter emphasizes the political correctness in line with the mainstream ideology. The CCP stipulates that women's studies "must be guided by Marxist perspectives on women", but how it should be guided is not explicated.

## **2.4 Representations of Women in China**

Having discussed the central role of media in constructing women's representation under the influence of power and ideology, and the unique situation in China, section four examines how women were represented in China. In other words, what research has been undertaken relating to the representations of women in China?

Since the emergence of the third-wave feminist movement in the West, the main site of struggle in the field of women's studies has shifted from a political movement to social and cultural criticism. Like other new social movements, scholars in the field address media as a site of misrecognition (Butler, 1988; Foucault, 2002, etc.), challenging the marginalization and devaluation of women perpetuated through everyday ideological values. Early Chinese scholars in the field of women's studies questioned the role of media including women's glossy magazines and romance novels in presenting and maintaining the patriarchal definitions of being a woman (Scott, 1986; Evans, 1997; Barlow, 2004; Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004; Hershatter, 2004; Wang, 2005). They also questioned and deconstructed the gender dichotomy, focusing on a more post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality in a contemporary context of power structure. According to Hershatter and Wang (2008), this shift in focus in the field of women's studies aimed to "enlarge the project beyond women to gender and beyond a male-female binary to a broader inquiry into relationships of power" ( p. 1406). Scholars believe that there needs to be further struggles in relation to changing the hegemonic definition and stereotyping of women in China as well as the patriarchal discourse that has been used to define them (Li, 2005).

In China, the first example of research concerning women's representation in the mass media was an article published in 1994 in *Journalism and Communication* titled *Evaluation of Women's Images in Advertisements* by Ma Lian and Cui Qiyun. This was the first time that a research report on the media's representation of women with a gender perspective had appeared in Chinese academic journals (Lin, 2008). Since the early 1990s, various social changes,

including economic prosperity, political democratization, and women's devaluation and marginalization in the market economy have been accompanied by a notable cultural trend in which gender concerns are delivered through many media texts. Yet it was not until 1995 when the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) was held in Beijing that research on women and communication officially became a theme of interest in the Chinese academy (Liu and Bu, 1997). In addition, during the FWCW, "women and the media" was listed as one of the 12 areas of urgent concern in the Programme of Action of the FWCW (1995). Following this call, in March 1996, the Media Monitor for Women Network, a Beijing-based non-governmental organization was founded by a group of women journalists and researchers. The Media Monitor for Women Network was the first action-oriented group to focus on media and gender in mainland China. The goals of the Network included rectifying the discriminating and disparaging attitudes towards women as well as promoting awareness of gender stereotypes to increase the visibility of women and gender-related issues in media and communications; enabling more women to access media and communications outlets in order to express their thoughts and ideas; and improving the status of female journalists in media and communication agencies.

Since 1995, under the influence of the FWCW to increase the visibility of women in media, there are more gender-related themes covered in media discourses with an increasingly diverse presentation, especially in the mainstream official media such as *People's Daily* and China Central TV (CCTV). Programs such as *Half the Sky* on CCTV, *Women Today* on Hebei TV, and *Pretty Women* on Beijing TV have emerged. These types of programs depict women's multi-layered roles, celebrate women's achievements, and to an extent reveal the issues and challenges faced by contemporary Chinese women. Other achievements relating to women in media include promoting media's gender sensitivity, expanding the impact of the gender perspective, and advocating for a genuine and diverse presentation of women's identity. Examples of representative research outputs include *Media Culture and Ideological Women – Theory and Practice* by Zhang Jinghua in 1994, *Media and Gender* by Bu Wei in 2001, *Social Gender and Media Communication* by Liu Liqun in 2004, and *Media and Gender Studies – Theories and Cases* by Cao Jin in 2008. Academic discussions focusing on topics such as the impact of media on women's representation, the career development of women professionals in the media industry, and the operation of women's media are all contributing to the complex interactive relationship between women and media.

Liu (2006) studied women's representations in Chinese TV dramas in the 1980s and 1990s. She found that the images of women represented in the TV dramas over these two decades became more independent and stronger due to social changes, but that the underlying patriarchal system has always placed women under male control. In the field of women's representations in literature, Chang (2010) drew similar conclusions in his paper, *A Semiotic Analysis of Female Images in Chinese Women's Magazines*. Chang used semiotic analysis to study the social myths and ideologies contained in the text of these magazines. He believes that the hidden ideology of the patriarchy and consumerism have been imbued in all the narratives and stories in these magazines. Having studied scholars' relevant research, Chang found that various types of women's magazines had stereotyped three paradigms of women over three eras in China after 1949: "iron girls", "devoted housewife", and "fashion girls". Furthermore, Chang noticed that new stereotypes that were showcased by the cultural industry and the movement of consumerism had changed the lifestyle of young urban women. In the domestic domain, Chang found that women's role had changed from maid to wife. Articles about clothes maintenance, home cleaning, and cooking recipes in women's magazines are no longer the main topics, as the home is not only a workplace but now also a place of relaxation and leisure for women. As for the meaning of marriage to women, it changed from dedication and devotion in the 1980s to serendipity and romance in the 1990s. The representation of women in women's magazines is a manifestation of the patriarchal ideology together with consumerism values. The dominant ideology to control women has not dispelled but turned to a more subtle and hidden form.

Barlow (2004) challenged the research methods used by Western scholars who studied Chinese women as an abstract and undifferentiated whole, regardless of time and place. Instead, she proposed that Chinese women must be analysed within Chinese history and context. Followed by Barlow's call, Li Xiaojiang (1997) commented on research concerning women's discourse in China, and found that in a specific context, different ideologies have generated different discourses about women. Chinese women shape their roles and social behaviours as women according to these discourses. In the same year, Glasser's (1997) empirical study of Chinese fiction magazines before and after China's implementation of the "Four Modernization" policies in the late 1970s supported Barlow's call. According to Glasser, the findings revealed an important irony—as China moved towards relative political openness and economic modernization, old stereotypes of women as homemakers and caregivers increasingly re-

emerged in the media content. Glasser argued that such representations of women have to be interpreted contextually. Later, Luo and Hao's research, *Media Portrayal of Women and Social Change* in 2007, investigated the relationship between the media and social changes by examining the cover pictures of *Women of China* from China's socio-economic and political-ideological contextual background (Luo and Hao, 2007). They found that the media's portrayal of women is a symbolic representation created through the interaction of Chinese Communist Party's ideology, editorial policy, and readers' taste as well as the changing reality of Chinese women's life and work. Today, Barlow's call of analysing Chinese women within Chinese history and context is widely accepted as an academic norm, in other words, a research paradigm in the field of women's studies.

Many of the researches focus on revealing the relation between the media's representations of women with the highly repressive policies of the Chinese Communist Party. Tightly controlled by the Communist Party, the Chinese media were used as instruments to propagate the party line and state policies (Perry and Selden, 2005). The official press is the party's mouthpiece and supports this communist system. McDougall (2020) noted that workers, farmers, soldiers, and forceful female characters played a central and heroic position in the new literature and art that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Eber (1976) found that the women of New China (after 1949) were portrayed as assured and outspoken, strong and independent to compete with men after the Land Reform Movement (1946–1953) and the promulgation of the New Marriage Law (1950). These researches have found out that party ideology alone does not determine the content of women's representations, but is also conditioned by changes in the political, economic, and social structures of Chinese society.

As for women's representations in newspapers, Feng (1998) compared the number of articles depicting women that were reported in eight Chinese newspapers and the number of articles depicting men. Other reported information that was also compared in the newspapers included age and social roles. Feng found that women appeared in the news reports less frequently compared with men, and their occupations and social status are less mentioned. In these news reports, social roles are dominated by men, family roles are dominated by women. Men in the news reports are often authoritative, while women mainly are reported as traditional auxiliary figures. Feng concluded that the news reports accentuated gender stereotypes of "men lead, women follow". Zhang (2003) investigated the portrayal of women in celebrity news reporting and found out that women were depicted as submissive, sensuous, and weak. Zhang claimed

this portrayal is *positive discrimination* toward women since submissive, sensuous, and weak women are considered good women by the audience, which will make the women celebrity more popular. Shi (2006) researched the age, occupation, education level, political status and personal achievement of the female model that was reported in the *People's Daily* and *China Women's News* from 1995 to 2001. The research results showed that the majority of the women reported were party members and elderly women. In addition, the articles mainly praised two aspects relating to personal characteristics of women: dedicated service and personal achievement. Li (2007) found that *China Women's News* mainly focused on women who have had successful careers and concluded that the position of women has been improved due to the state policy, media and social influence.

To date, research on women's representation in the Chinese media has mostly centred on women's journals and periodicals. For example, Wang (2011) analysed changes in the cover images used in the magazine *Women of China* over the past 60 years, and pointed out a shift from "production idols" to the "consumer idols". The majority of studies to date have adopted qualitative research methods such as a content analysis approach or symbolic analysis. In addition, the small amount of research data or the short span of time during which research has been undertaken both make the results prone to the researcher's subjectivity and less convincing. Furthermore, many studies to date simply confirm what is already known. In contrast, this thesis adopts a combined approach of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine a large data set comparably. This methodology is discussed next in Chapter 3.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter underpins the theoretical framework that supports this thesis to examine women's representation and the construction of women's roles encoded in *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily* in China from 1872 to 2012. This study combines quantitative corpus analysis and qualitative analyses of critical discourse analysis. The next chapter illustrates this combined methodological approach.

## Chapter 3 Methodology: Data, Procedures, and Methods

To answer the research questions, this study combines the quantitative corpus analysis of 1.9 million words of data with qualitative analyses of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine representations of women in *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*, the two most influential newspapers, over 140 years of Chinese history. The focus of print media, in the form of newspapers, was chosen because of its central role in shaping opinions, setting agendas, constructing cultural hegemony, and maintaining a power structure; as well as the media's ability to define issues, topics, and situations which gives them ideological power (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). In this chapter, the methodology and the step-by-step research procedures employed by this thesis are set out. In addition, the chapter explains why combining corpus linguistics (CL) and CDA is ideal to illustrate how to interpret women's representation and gender-related asymmetries in the field of media discourse. The first section examines the research data in detail, including the data sources, data collection criteria, sampling strategy, corpus construction, and the linguistic tool and techniques employed. Then, sections two and three discuss CL and CDA respectively. The limitations of these two approaches and why the synergy of the two has gathered momentum is explained in section four. Last, section five summarizes the chapter.

### 3.1 Data

This section provides a detailed account of the decisions and procedures involved in the collection of data and the administration of the corpus. The first subsection, *Shen Bao and People's Daily*, elucidates the data sources, and the nature of the two newspapers. The second subsection, *Data Collection*, covers collection criteria and processes. The third subsection, *Corpus Construction*, explains how the four corpora were constructed. Then, the final subsection, *Analytical Tool: Sketch Engine*, provides detailed information regarding the text analysis software that was used in this research.

### 3.1.1 *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*

This study examines women's representation in *Shen Bao* (1872–1949) and *People's Daily* (1950–2012), two mainstream newspapers that span 140 years of Chinese modern history (1872–2012). Figure 3.1 illustrates the two newspapers with *Shen Bao* on the left and *People's Daily* on the right. These 140 years are categorized into four historical time periods so that both comparative and parallel analysis could be conducted: late Qing (1872–1911), Republican (1912–1949), socialist (1950–1978) and post-socialist (1979–2012). These two newspapers were selected because of their great influence on the calibration of the cultural, political, and social matters and circulation (MacKinnon, 1997; Chin, 2014; Wilkinson, 2022), and for their annual circulation size. Aside from providing readers with news, newspapers also provide crucial information about society. The construction of women's representation and roles have been reconceptualized and remoulded most authoritatively and convincingly by these two newspapers.



Figure 3.1 *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*

*Shen Bao* (1872–1949) is the oldest modern Chinese newspaper, and the most influential and longest-lasting commercial newspaper of pre-socialist China (MacKinnon, 1997). When Japan

occupied Shanghai in 1937, *Shen Bao* was controlled by the Japanese. From 1945 onwards, *Shen Bao* was controlled by the Kuomintang (KMT), or the Chinese Nationalist Party, which is a political party in the Republic of China. The Chinese communist government shut down *Shen Bao* in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party came into power. As an important primary source, *Shen Bao* operated during three reigns of the Qing Dynasty (Tongzhi, Guangxu, Xuantong) and the Republican era, documenting many significant historical events. Known for its rich news reporting, commentary and advertisements, *Shen Bao* played a pivotal role in the formation of public opinion in the late Qing and Republican eras in China.

Compared to other newspapers that were around before the socialist era, *Shen Bao* operated for the longest time and had the largest circulation. During its 77 years of publication, 600 issues were circulated, with the highest number of copies being sold in 1932 (150,000 copies). *Shen Bao* has great value due to its heterogenous genre of articles and the large number of historical materials that are available for research. *Shen Bao* is known as the encyclopaedia and the treasure trove of modern Chinese history. It has attracted a wide readership and still serves as an important source on the late Qing and Republican eras in China. Data is collected using a set of search terms (discussed in the next subsection) from the holistic full-text database which Durham University has access to (see Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2 Full-Text Database of Shen Bao

Before discussing the data collection, two sets of concepts regarding the Chinese language must be clarified. The first set is Classical Chinese versus Modern Chinese. The second set is traditional Chinese versus simplified Chinese. Classical Chinese, also known as Literary

Chinese, is the language of the classic literature established in the Spring and Autumn period (771–476 BCE) and the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) over two thousand years ago and is the written form of Old Chinese (Weng, 2020). Classical Chinese is still in use during the late Qing era and the majority of the Republican era. Classical Chinese is different from any modern and spoken form of Chinese, and the name of this phenomenon is *yán wén fēnlí*—the separation of written and spoken Chinese. Classical Chinese was used for almost all formal writing in China from two thousand years ago until the early 20th century, and during various time periods of time in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. There are several main characteristics of Classical Chinese:

- (1) Classical Chinese has no punctuation;
- (2) Many characters are no longer in use;
- (3) In relation to syntax, throughout Chinese history, the literati have emphasized tempering the language, and instead pursuing *wēi yán dà yì*—profound meanings behind the subtle words [*of Autumn and Spring Chūnqiū*]. Omission and inversion in Classical Chinese is common, which is always ready to drop subjects and objects, or move word orders. There is no use of copula in Classical Chinese, and words are not restrictively categorized into parts of speech: nouns are commonly used as verbs, adjectives as nouns, and so on. Huang, Peng, and Wang (2002) claimed that Classical Chinese is lexically and syntactically very ambiguous. Likewise, both Hsueh (1997) and Pulleyblank (1995) noted that many scholars have argued that Classical Chinese has no grammar or syntax.
- (4) In terms of semantics, many characters have changed significantly in meaning. For example, 丈人 *zhàng rén* in modern Chinese means father-in-law, while in Classical Chinese, it means old man.
- (5) Classical Chinese rarely uses words composed of two Chinese characters; nearly all words are of one syllable only. This stands in direct contrast with modern Northern Chinese varieties including Mandarin, in which two-syllable, three-syllable, and four-syllable words are extremely common. The author of this thesis believes that polysyllabic characters exist partly because polysyllabic words evolved in Chinese to disambiguate homophones that resulted from sound changes.

Modern Chinese is widely accepted as referring to the language that was used by the Han ethnic (汉族) Chinese people after the May Fourth Movement (1919) in the Republican era. However, the use of Modern Chinese was promoted since the late Qing era. In 1905, the Qing government announced the abolition of the 1300-year-old imperial examination system (*kējǔ zhìdù*). The imperial examination system shouldered the fundamental function of social hierarchical

mobilization, helped to unify the empire, and gave legitimacy to imperial rule (Cheng, 2009). Cultural innovation, such as the education of women and the promotion of Western technology, was an important part of the reforms advocated in the late Qing era (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion), which aimed to enlighten the Chinese people. Liang Qichao (1873–1929), arguably one of the most influential cultural leaders and the most important reformist thinkers of the late Qing era, encouraged the use of Modern Chinese and discarding the use of Classical Chinese. The national language *guóyǔ*, the name used for the Modern Chinese in the Republican era and in Taiwan to date was promoted in contrast to “hundreds of mutually unintelligible dialects of locality” (Weng, 2020, p. 1), changing the classical style of writing to the vernacular style at the same time. “Vernacular” is used in opposition to “classical” or “literary”. The vernacular language movement, *báihuà yùndòng*, together with the national language movement, *guóyǔ yùndòng*, were implemented to accelerate the development of the reforms trying to revitalize China and to improve its cultural and economic conditions. As Weng (2020) points out, “the English term ‘vernacular language’ is more capacious than any of its Chinese equivalents. When discussing writing, the term is usually equated with *báihuà*, a word that now refers to the standard written language, but only gained that sense starting in the 1890s with the rise of vernacular newspapers” (p. 1).

At the end of the Republican era, the KMT fled to Taiwan after being defeated in the Civil War against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (1945–1950). When the People’s Republic of China was formed by the CCP in 1949, the CCP decreed that the Language Reform Movement should comprise three tasks: (1) to simplify the Chinese characters; (2) to popularize *Pǔtōnghuà* (i.e., common speech); and (3) to work out and promote the revised Chinese romanization *Hànyǔ pīnyīn fāng'àn* (Zhou, 1986). This form of Modern Chinese is known as simplified Chinese, compared with the form of Modern Chinese still used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other places known as traditional Chinese. Language reform, that is, the simplification of Chinese, has long been a subject of dispute, and is still questioned by scholars nowadays (Ramsey, 1989; Tabouret-Keller, 1997; Ba, 2005).

To summarise, Classical Chinese with traditional form was used in the late Qing era (1872–1911), modern Chinese with traditional form was used in the Republican era (1912–1949), and modern Chinese with simplified form was used in both the socialist (1950–1978) and post-socialist (1979–2012) eras. All these above-mentioned facts have made the analysis more challenging as well as more interesting at the same time. Additionally, it is worth mentioning

that although there is more and more academic attention on applying corpus linguistics in modern Chinese language, applying corpus linguistic methods to analyse Classical Chinese is still scarce.

*People's Daily* or *Renmin Ribao* (1946–present) is the official newspaper of the CCP's Central Committee, and is published worldwide with a stable annual circulation of 3 million copies. It is acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the top ten most authoritative, influential newspapers in the world (Cheng, 2009). *People's Daily* was established in 1948, and has been based in Beijing since 1949, the time the CCP took power. Before the 1980s, copies of the paper were posted for public view in display cases at street intersections, and articles were frequently read at local party meetings, reprinted in local newspapers, and quoted in broadcast programs. *People's Daily* carries serious politically-oriented articles and numerous speeches and reports by government or party leaders and serves as an official tool to publicize the achievements of China and promote the ideology of the CCP both domestically and internationally. It has witnessed different crucial historical moments of the nation's development and social transformation, including the changes in women's representation. Editorials in *People's Daily* deal with subjects such as gender and politics. Regional editions of *People's Daily* carrying some local news have been available since the 1990s. An overseas edition has been published since 1985, and in 1997, the internet version of the paper was created, with translations in Russian, French, English, and Arabic.

Like many political movements in modern Chinese history, the mobilization and development of the women's movement are often achieved and mediated through official mass media like the *People's Daily*. As one of the most important official mass media sites through which the national agenda is articulated and disseminated, and central deployments are publicized, *People's Daily* plays a particularly important role in creating identities and roles from a social and institutional perspective. Therefore, *People's Daily* provides a good platform to interpret national gender discourse. Data is collected using a set of search terms from the full-text database which Durham University has access to (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 Full-Text Database of People's Daily

### 3.1.2 Data Collection

Having explained the nature of *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily* in the first section, this section explains how the research data was generated and collected from the full-text databases of these two newspapers. Given that notions of representativeness and comparability are essential in corpus-based studies, the data collection process is a pivotal procedure in this study.

First, it is impossible to use the whole full-text database due to the size and workload involved, which is beyond a single researcher's ambit. Second, including too many irrelevant articles will invalidate the analysis results of important statistical tools for the corpus, like the keywords function, high-frequency words function, and so forth. This means consistent selection criteria that will generate the most relevant articles relating to women must be established in a credible, reliable, and scientific way. The data generated needs to be balanced, credible, and representative. Following a mixture of introspection regarding different sampling strategies, the reading of articles, and testing different combinations of search terms, the keywords chosen to generate the articles that were then collected and put in the corpora, were *nǚ xìng* (female gender) and *fù nǚ* (women). These two search words were employed to search the holistic online full-text databases and gather articles for the four eras.

In this way, the data collected is purposive, representative, consistent, balanced, and credible. Comparably, a manual selection of data will cause bias. For example, if one considers that a certain newspaper is sexist, one may look through articles that reference gender inequality and then choose articles that clearly demonstrate sexism. In extreme cases, “cherry-picking” the data selected may result in a biased database (Magalhães, 2007). Thus, the results from this kind of data collection process may be lacking in generalizability, replicability, and reliability. Another instance of biased data collection, in an early stage of the analysis, is that one may overlook large numbers of articles that present more positive representations of women; instead, one may only focus on the rest of the articles, which provides evidence of gender inequality. More importantly, the analysis may lead readers to infer that the data selected intentionally by the researcher is representative of the attitudes expressed in the newspaper. Hence, in this study, all the articles generated using the search terms “nǚ xìng” (female gender) and “fù nǚ” (women) are included in the corpus unselectively. No other selective statistical sampling methods were involved in this study.

### 3.1.3 Search Terms

Having explained how data is generated and collected, the following paragraphs expound on the two search words of *nǚ xìng* (female gender) and *fù nǚ* (women), as these words have unique meanings in China. The word *fù* refers to married women and *nǚ* refers to unmarried women. The combined term of *fù nǚ* to denote all women first appeared in Chinese literature in 1898 in Kang Youwei’s *Petition on the Ban of Women’s Foot Binding* 《请禁妇女裹足折》.

Later in the 1920s, the word *nǚ xìng* (female gender) was introduced by the intellectuals into the Chinese language, together with other new words such as society, intellectuals and individualism. These imported terms become part of an important discourse to criticize Confucianism (Barlow, 2004). For example, the film *New Women* released in 1935, starring Ruan Lingyu, reflects the work and married life of new urban women. The so called “new women” refers to women with higher education and independent economic ability, different from “old women” who are attached to traditional families and dominated by their father, husband and brothers under the framework of Confucian doctrine. The word *nǚ xìng* first started to gather momentum during the Republican period to construct women’s roles. However, this word did not appear in the early discourse used by the CCP. In 1921, the *Circular*

of the CCP Central Bureau first discussed women issues using the word fù nǚ, and it has been “fù nǚ” for the CCP since then. The difference between the usage of nǚ xìng (female gender) and fù nǚ (women) is most notably reflected in a critical review in *People’s Daily* in 1964 titled “How to Treat Women’s Issues 怎样看待妇女问题”. The review states:

*When discussing women’s issues, one must have a clear historical materialist perspective. Make an explicit class analysis on their ideological viewpoints based on the different class and time that the women are from. Rigorous class issues such as the outlook on life and love cannot be treated measily as the abstract and general ‘female nǚ xìng’ or ‘male nán xìng’ issues. (People’s Daily, 1964.10.28, p. 5)*

This shows that fù nǚ (women) is a social, historical, and class designation, while, on the other hand, nǚ xìng (female gender) is a biological, abstract, and declassified designation. Barlow (1994; 2004) asserted that words like “nǚ xìng”, “nǚ zǐ”, and “nǚ rén” link to gendered behaviour, characteristics and attitudes. In contrast, the CCP’s definition of fù nǚ defined women as revolutionaries who are not composed of will, emotion, consciousness or sexuality, but are economic, historical, theoretical, political and revolutionary, which refers to the working-class discourse that linked national ideology and public opinion.

The word nǚ xìng reappeared in the discourse system of the CCP in the post-socialist era and was mostly used to describe “new women” who were not proletariat and had new ideas. For example, “Qiu Jin was the first revolutionary woman decapitated for the Democratic Revolution” (*People’s Daily*, 1979.12.5, p. 6). A typical example that described “new women” was provided by *People’s Daily* to portray women with revolutionary thoughts in the time period of the May Fourth Movement:

*...their short hair still has the traces of scissors, childlike eyes, with revolutionary passion from their hearts, exuding romantic atmosphere of being ready to sacrifice themselves for the revolution. This is the vivid image of the new women promoted during the May 4th Movement. The model of the new woman. (People’s Daily, 1982.5.2, p.5)*

The difference in usage between nǚ xìng (female gender) and fù nǚ (women) gradually disappeared during the post-socialist era. Today “nǚ xìng” (female gender) is increasingly used

to refer to all women from political leaders to ordinary people, from industry to academia, however, in official and governmental documents and speeches, “fù nǚ” (women) is still the dominant word that is used.

However, as discussed above, the term nǚ xìng (female gender) was not a commonly used term in the late Qing era. The term nǚ xìng first appeared in Chinese literature in 1898. Before then, nǚ zǐ (women) was the culturally equivalent term to nǚ xìng. In the late Qing era, nǚ zǐ was more commonly used, while nǚ xìng (female gender) was not commonly used until the Republican era (Barlow, 1994). Using nǚ xìng as the search term only resulted in nine articles, which is too small for a quantitative study. To sum up, for the late Qing era, nǚ zǐ (female gender) and fù nǚ (women) were used. For the Republican, socialist and post-socialist eras, nǚ xìng (female gender) and fù nǚ (women) were used. Table 3.1 shows the search keywords used in each of the four time eras in this study.

Having explained the two search terms with which to query the online full-text databases, it is also worth mentioning the results of some other very interesting experiments that were performed when testing the search terms. If only the one search term “nǚ xìng” (female gender) was used, then the second corpus for the Republican era contained 3,207 articles compared with 487, while the third corpus contained only 7 articles. The reason behind this difference in the number of articles retrieved will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis (Chapter 5 to Chapter 8). If only the one search term “nǚ” (female) was used, the number of articles generated was too large for a single researcher to manage and many articles that did not concern women were included. If only one of these two search terms was used, too many irrelevant articles were generated.

In relation to the amount of data that is generated, the larger and more representative the data, the more confident the researcher can be that any findings can be extrapolated. According to Stubbs (1997), a concern with the size of the corpus is the lack of representativeness of the often small and arbitrarily selected texts. A small corpus may lack some of the features under consideration, “or contain them in too small frequencies for results to be reliable, particularly when issues of statistical significance are not addressed” (Baker, et al., 2008, p. 275). The two search terms generated 1,584 articles and 1,929,126 words in total. The balance between a reliable corpus and the time and workload that was involved for a single researcher was attained.

The articles collected and selected for analysis were mainly from three categories. The first category contained articles that discussed women, including specific personalities, the general role of women, their achievements, concerns, lifestyles, careers, and roles, and how women dealt with work and family. The second category included articles that did not directly portray women but offered suggestions about how women readers can develop and nurture their relationships with men, children, family members and kin. Then, the third category contained articles with advice and tips on how to manage a household. In addition, some fictional stories that featured women characters were also generated and thus included based on the criteria that were established for data collection.

### 3.1.4 Corpus Construction

Once the research data was generated and collected, the next task involved putting the data into corpora. Four corpora according to different time eras were constructed so that both comparative and parallel analysis could be conducted. Table 3.1 provides detailed information about the data collected for this research:

Table 3.1 Corpora and Time Periods

Corpus / Time period	Era	Dates	Source	Search keywords	Articles	Characters
1	Late Qing	1872–1911	<i>Shen Bao</i>	“女子” “妇女”	540	471,505
2	Republican	1912–1949		“女性” “妇女”	487	608,435
3	Socialist	1949–1978	<i>People's Daily</i>	“女性” “妇女”	40	152,569
4	Post-Socialist	1979–2012		“女性” “妇女”	517	696,617

The corpora size in this study is large, containing 1,584 articles and 1,929,126 words in total. However, the corpora size was still manageable for a single researcher. Data was categorized over four time periods: the late Qing (1872–1911), Republican (1912–1949), socialist (1950–1978) and post-socialist (1979–2012) eras. These four eras and the respective corpus are numbered from 1 to 4 accordingly. Chapter 4 discusses the unique historical background to explain why these 140 years (1872–2012) were categorized into four sub corpora.

### 3.1.5 Analytical Tool: Sketch Engine

This section discusses the analytical tool that was used for this study. The fourth-generation corpus analysis software, Sketch Engine, was employed to analyse the data. Sketch Engine is a leading corpus analytical tool and has been widely used in various disciplines. Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery (2013) claimed in their book, *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press*, that Sketch Engine is “a sophisticated online corpus analysis tool that is able to identify salient patterns of particular words within different grammatical structures” (p. 31). Figure 3.4 shows the dashboard of Sketch Engine with the major functions.

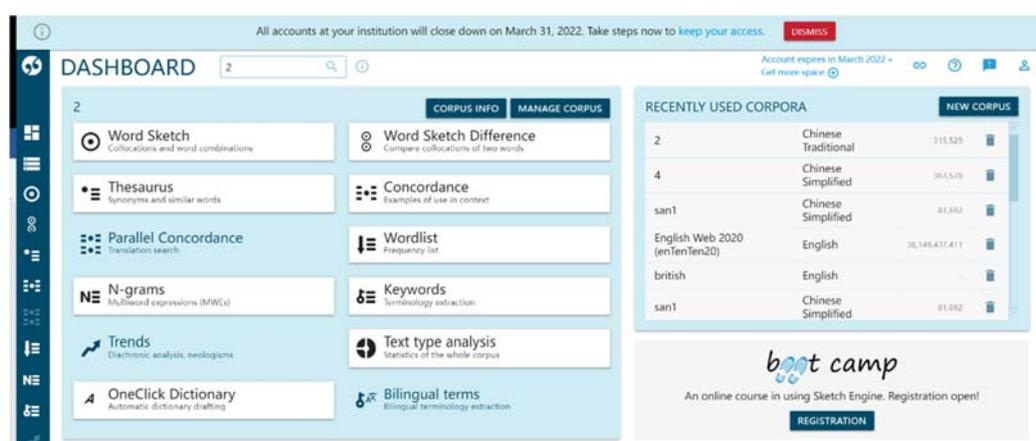


Figure 3.4 Sketch Engine

Given the nature of the Classical Chinese used in the late Qing era (refer to the section *Shen Bao and People's Daily* in this chapter), analysing Classical Chinese using Sketch Engine is a complex process. Compared with other corpus tools, Sketch Engine provides a grammatical collection of modules for searching patterns in a language and an integrated suite of programs for looking at how words behave in texts. The account to use Sketch Engine is provided by the European Lexicographic Infrastructure (ELEXIS) to all British universities until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The following paragraphs outline the main text analysis functions of Sketch Engine.

The Word Sketch function is the function that gives Sketch Engine its name. This function provides a one-page summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour, which is a plethora of grammatical and collocational information about the search terms. Another sister function, Word Sketch Difference, compares the word sketches of two words. For instance, in this study, after the word sketches of “nǚ xìng” (female gender) and “fù nǚ” (women) were

generated respectively, Sketch Engine can compare the two in a grammatical and collocational manner, so that parallel analysis can be undertaken.

The concordance function is used to create collocations of a word, so that all the collocates for this word within a corpus will be generated. This function answers where and how the collocations happen and show why a collocate occurred in a word sketch. It shows what is in the corpus and displays the raw data. Using the concordance function, each instance is displayed with its immediate co-text and its filename, with the word searched highlighted and centred for prominence. All the instances can be sorted either alphabetically or reverse alphabetically to the left or to the right of the word. This sorting function is very useful in that it allows the user to uncover possible patterns in all of the instances and to discard irrelevant instances for a particular study. Once the user has a concordance, there are many things that can be done with it. It can be sorted, selected, sampled, filtered (for example by Context, or Text Type), copied or saved. A range of frequency analyses are available, including collocation reports and analysis by text types (where the corpus has text types defined). Once a specific collocate has caught the researcher's attention, this collocate can be clicked for more context, and the metadata for the search word is displayed in the top left corner with all the statistical information for this word in the corpus (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b).

It should be mentioned that, Baker claimed that this process of assigning grammatical classification to words, so called 'tagging', is not 100 per cent accurate. It is carried out automatically via a computer programme that uses rules, some of which are based on the positions of words, some are based on accessing a lexicon that knows certain words or word endings will always have certain tags, and some make use of probabilities. Additionally, grammar is comparatively complicated and less rigorous in Chinese language. As a result, occasionally errors can creep into the tagging. Most taggers achieve around 95 to 97 per cent accuracy (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b). The tagging of the corpus 3 is generally good. In order to prevent cases of mis-tagging, I examined concordances, check relationship actually functions in the way that Sketch Engine claims. A concordance is simply a table showing all the cases of a word, phrase or pair of collocates in their immediate co-text (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b). Figure 7.2 shows a concordance from the frame {women + [verb]}, where the verb is 'gain 获得'. Although there were thirteen cases of this in the corpus, I have shown only five, in order to save space.



Figure 3.5 Concordance of {women + [verb 'gained']}

The frequency wordlist function provides a frequency list of all the words that are included in the selected corpus based on one or more text files. Ordered either by frequency or alphabetically, it can be used to study word type, identify word clusters, compare the frequency of a word in different texts, compare translation equivalents between different languages, or obtain a concordance of the words in the frequency list. Kenny (2001) used the wordlist function to analyse lexical items that occur only once, the “hapaxes”, in her corpus in order to study lexical creativity in translation. A word or phrase with an extremely high (or low) frequency is worthy of scholars’ attention because the frequency most convincingly reveals information about the idiosyncrasies of the text producer.

The keyword function creates a list of all the words and word forms from a large corpus of text according to certain statistical criteria in the text corpus that occur rarely or frequently. The keyword function of Sketch Engine is used to produce a keyword list, which is an extension to the frequency list. This is done by comparing the frequency lists of two corpora with the help of the software. For example, by comparing the list from a large, general corpus with that of a smaller specialized corpus, the keywords of the smaller corpus can be identified.

The final function is the distributional thesaurus function that Sketch Engine can prepare for a corpus. Thesaurus are created based on collocations when studying large amounts of texts. Firth (1957), who coined the term collocation, summarized that “You should know a word by the company it keeps” (p. 11). The collocation function presents a word’s “company”, so that we can study this word. If two words have many collocates in common, they will appear in each other’s thesaurus entry. It works as follows: if we find instances of both drink tea and drink coffee, that is one small piece of evidence that tea and coffee are similar. We can say that

they “share” the collocate drink (verb), in the OBJECT-OF relation. In a very large computation, for all pairs of words, we can compute how many collocates they share, and the words that share the most collocates (after normalisation) are the ones that appear in a word’s thesaurus entry. Distributional thesauruses are a topic of great interest in computational linguistics and show promise for addressing a range of challenges such as automated translation (Kennedy, 2010) .

Each of these functions offer a number of other features in relation to the text corpus. For example, collocation and dispersion plots are computed with a concordance search. In addition, there are a number of additional modules that are useful for the preparation, clean-up and formatting of the text corpus. Sketch Engine can be used in 80 different languages. Sketch Engine is—along with several other software products similar in nature—an internationally popular program for work based on a corpus-linguistic methodology. However, this study mainly uses the basic functions mentioned above to generate the words for the critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse. The research procedures are explained in the section below.

### **3.2 Corpus Linguistics**

The availability of powerful computers and large amounts of electronic texts has made corpus linguistics (CL) an increasingly popular method. In the language sciences, a corpus is a large body of written text or transcribed speech that can serve as a basis for linguistic analysis and description (Kennedy, 2010). CL is the empirical “study of language based on examples of *real life* language use” (McEnery and Wilson, 1996, p. 13) which relies heavily on corpora from which generalizations, probabilities, and trends about language can be made. CL analyses authentic text (i.e., samples of language produced in genuine communicative situations), and any form of linguistic inquiry based on data derived from such a corpus. Generally, the CL method creates a representative set of data that is then put into a corpus. The larger and more representative the corpus, the more confident the researcher can be that any findings can be extrapolated to that particular research. In the initial stage of analysis, the corpus linguist relies on computer software. For this study, Sketch Engine 6.0 was employed which can quickly and accurately perform complex calculations on the corpus as a whole. Such calculations are often based on frequency information, sometimes with attendant statistical tests, though Sketch Engine can also present data in particular ways that make it easier for human beings to identify linguistic patterns (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a).

One issue that has generated considerable debate in CL is the distinction between corpus-based versus corpus-driven approaches, which was first argued by Tognini-Bonelli (2001). The distinction between these two approaches lies in whether the corpus approach is used as a theory or method. The corpus-driven approach embodies a theory perspective to the research (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001), that allows the research to be driven by whatever is found to be salient or frequent in the corpus. Linguistic choices or patterns that run counter to intuitive prediction are thus identified (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). In this way, the researchers' subjective bias is limited. Importantly, the corpus-driven approach enables replicability—the fact that another researcher, using the same corpus and the same tool, will be directed to the same frequencies. According to McEnery and Hardie (2011), the “Corpus itself should be the sole source of our hypothesis about language” (p. 6), that is, the corpus “drives” the research in the sense that the analyst observes what is salient to explore in the corpus and theory is derived from the corpus. Compared with the corpus-driven approach, the corpus-based approach refers to “a methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify theories and descriptions” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, p. 65), “in order to validate, refute or refine” them (McEnery and Hardie, 2011, p. 6). The corpus-based approach gives the researcher more control, and the corpus is used more as a way of testing out existing hypotheses (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Some scholars reject “the binary distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven linguistics” and opine that “all CL can justly be described as corpus-based” (McEnery and Hardie, 2011, p. 6). Gries (2010, p. 330) believed that “truly corpus-driven work seems a myth at best”, and “the distinction between the two is overstated”. In addition, Gries believes that “in effect it says that corpus-driven linguistics, where scholars use corpus-driven characteristics to argue for corpus linguistics as a theory, is in fact less suited to contributing to linguistic theory than corpus-based linguistics, which often views corpus linguistics as a method(ology) only” (Gries, 2006, p. 191).

This study uses the corpus-based method. As discussed in the following section, a corpus analysis does not follow a specific set of procedures in a particular order but can also take different routes (refer to the section **The Combined Approach of CL and CDA** later in this chapter). However, CL is generally quantitative and focuses attention on the local context or situation such as in concordance analysis, which is “a collection of the occurrences of a word-form, each in its own textual environment” (Sinclair, 1991, p. 32).

Baker, et al. (2008) claimed that there were three advantages of a corpus-based approach. First, the larger amount of data being studied means that any findings we make are more credible than those based on a handful of examples. Second, we can obtain a much better picture surrounding the frequency of particular phenomena. A third advantage of taking a corpus-based approach is that a large amount of data has the potential to reveal choices that are much less frequent (though not necessarily those that never occur, as discussed in the following section) and much more objective. In addition, Biber, Conrad, and Reppen believed that the corpus-based approach is particularly significant, because the corpus-based approach enables quantitative analysis includes “qualitative, functional interpretations of quantitative patterns” (1998, p. 5). Methods in CL have been applied to the analysis of discourse-level phenomena such as “characteristics associated with the use of a language feature”, “realizations of a particular function”, “characterizing a variety of language” and “mapping the occurrences of a feature through entire texts” (Conrad, 2002, p. 75). Furthermore, in the last decade, the application of CL in critical discourse analysis (CDA) research, especially to media and political discourse, has gained momentum (Baker, et al., 2008; see also the section **The Combined approach of CL and CDA** later in this chapter).

Although CL is now well established, the most debated area is whether it is a tool, a method, a methodology, a discipline, a theory, or a combination of these. This may be explained by the transversal nature of CL, and by the way in which it is driven by technology. However, this debate concerning the nature of CL does not concern this study, as in this study, it is adopted as an approach. The limitations of CL are discussed in section four, **The Combined approach of CL and CDA**, together with another approach that this thesis adopted: CDA.

### **3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis**

The discussion in Chapter 2 showed how ideology, under the influence of power, is encoded in language and then disseminated through media discourse. Discourse establishes, maintains or alters the power relationship between social groups through the expression of ideology. Individuals or groups use discourse to create reality so as to protect power relations that are not to be challenged. In terms of this study, the dominating ideology which refers to the ideology of the ruling class, has the resource and power to define women, and endow meaning to being a woman. This process of interpretation and definition is carried out through discourse. This

section, **Critical Discourse Analysis**, discusses key concepts in critical discourse analysis (CDA).

### 3.3.1 *Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis*

According to van Leeuwen (2008), discourse is a recontextualization of a social practice, and discourse principally regards language as a social practice to represent the world (Fairclough, Mulderrig, and Wodak, 2011; van Dijk, 1998a). Fairclough (2003, p. 9) speaks of the role of discourses in “inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies”, and discourse analysis is to show “how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural, or political contexts of language use and communication impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or strategies of text or dialogue, and vice versa, how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts” (2003, p. 45).

Emerging from critical linguistics, CDA views language as embedded in its sociolinguistic context, and therefore, examines how grammatical or lexical choices are used to express social processes and social phenomena (Fairclough, 1995). Cao (2014) explained the meaning of “critical” as “in the sense that the researcher does not take anything for granted, but opens up the complexities and contradictions, as well as interests and power relations that are embedded in texts, talks and related actions” (p. 3). Therefore, critical discourse linguists try to explore how linguistic devices are incorporated to permeate power and ideology in certain social contexts because they are ideological. According to Fairclough (1995), CDA is an approach to discourse analysis and considers that language is a social practice. CDA examines how ideologies, dominance and power relations are expressed in language, and how discourse reproduces and maintains these relations of dominance and inequality, and at the same time, affects and constructs these relations. Wodak (2011, p. 52) claimed that CDA can “demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies”. The aim of CDA is to reveal the correlation between discourse, ideology, and power.

The area of women’s representation has become the area of interest in CDA research. Lazar (2005) states that “investigations of the inter relations between gender, power, ideology and discourse are necessarily complex and multifaceted, which explains why feminist studies and CDA alike (and feminist CDA at their confluence) are open to interdisciplinary research” ( p. 13). Due to gender’s close relation with power, studies on the representation of women have frequently been approached from the perspective of CDA which is related to studies of

language and gender (Julé, 2008). Power can be projected through the choices of linguistic resources in projecting meaning and social values. Hence, CDA is a powerful tool to reveal the ideology hidden in the news discourse.

Wodak and Meyer's *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2016) mentioned that one of the biggest differences between CDA and discourse analysis is that CDA is interdisciplinary, problem-oriented or issue-oriented, rather than paradigm-oriented. In addition, CDA highlights "the underlying ideologies (original emphasis) that play a role in the reproduction of or resistance against dominance or inequality" (van Dijk, 1995, pp.17–18). A critical discourse analysis studies a real social phenomenon rather than a language phenomenon. The problem-oriented characteristics of CDA have determined that "CDA is interdisciplinary" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, pp. 1–2) in order to be able to fully understand and analyse social problems reflected through language, and to "investigate the role that language played" in shaping the social phenomenon (Fairclough, 1995, p. 30). Compared with CDA, discourse analysis is often theory-based, with its emphasis on the linguistic structure and patterns, which does not have these two characteristics or is not obvious.

Discourse analysis study language in use, while CDA is more concerned with abuses of power. According to scholars at Lancaster University (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013, p. 22), "Although the individual goals and foci of many CDA practitioners may differ, there is generally a broad consensus towards creating a fairer, more transparent society, in which people are given more opportunities, and vulnerable groups are empowered rather than exploited." One strand of CDA, called positive CDA, focuses on highlighting what texts "do well" and "get right" (Martin and Rose, 2003). Theoretically, it should be possible to conduct CDA from any point of view, although it is very rare to find CDA practitioners explicitly arguing from perspectives that support wrongdoings, such as massacre, or favour viewpoints that others would label homophobic, sexist, or racist. Other than the correlation of power, discourse and ideology discussed, the CDA approach comprises other pivotal concepts such as *Naturalization and Denaturalization*, and *Text and Discourse*, which are explained in the following two sections.

### 3.3.2 *Naturalization and Denaturalization*

Fairclough (2015) speaks of what Gramsci called *hegemony* (Gramsci, 2014) as *naturalization*. For Fairclough, *naturalization* refers to a phenomenon where a type of discourse is dominant

over another type of discourse by means of regulating and institutionalizing ways of talking and behaving and by producing and reproducing ideologies through the use of language (Fairclough, 2011). Through naturalization, discourse exercises power not as a physically violent or autocratic imposition of dominance, rather, it pretends to be natural and legitimate through the imposition of social representations. Naturalization is associated with ideological common sense, in the sense that by the naturalization of the discourse, its ideology will change into everyday common sense. Regardless of the terms used to describe the process of creating the ideological common sense that is accepted by all social groups, these notions of *hegemony* and *naturalization* point to power that results from the dominant ideology. The success of a dominant group, or class from the perspective of Gramsci's hegemony theory, is largely determined by their ability to convince a subordinate group, or class, to accept their subjective ideologies. According to Fairclough, "ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible" (1989, p. 85).

In the process of naturalization and the creation of everyday common sense, the type of discourse used loses its ideological character and tends to become merely the discourse of the institution itself instead of the discourse of a special class or group within that institution. In this way, the discourse seems or pretends to be neutral, and having no hidden ideology. Our words are never neutral (Fiske, 1994), and words are produced from people's own culture, experience, interest and knowledge. In this sense, CDA is a process of denaturalization, representing the dialectic relationship between language, power, and ideology to reveal naturalizations, and to expose inequality and injustice.

### 3.3.3 *Text and Discourse*

As afore discussed, the term *discourse* is used by Fairclough (2003) to refer to the entire process of social interaction, emphasizing the dynamic interaction among the social factors. In contrast, *text* is a product and a resource, and the process of production and interpretation ( Fairclough, Mulderrig, and Wodak, 2011). Hence, text is only part of the process of social interaction, and textual analysis is only part of discourse analysis which contains the analysis of both productive and interpretative processes. Luke (2002) argued that, "[...] what texts 'do' in the world cannot be explained solely through text analysis or text analytic language. To reiterate, the actual power of the text, its material and discourse consequences, can only be described by reference to broader social theoretic models of the world" (p. 102). The discursive practice dimension of

a communicative event consists of both the processes of text production and text consumption. According to Fairclough (Fairclough, 2015), since “the values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted against a background of common-sense assumptions which give textual features their values”, coherence is needed between the texts and social structures (p. 117). Hence, the texts shaped by their producer represent the perspectives and rules of the news organisations. The text in the articles of *Shen Bao* and *People’s Daily* describing women’s roles is produced under the influence of power and ideology, and CDA provides a methodological approach to examine this influence.

Discourse comprises three parts: text, interaction, and social context. Accordingly, since discourse analysis means the analysis of relations between the actual language used and the wider social and cultural contexts, Fairclough attributed three components to the communicative event—*text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice* (Fairclough, 2011). In practice, Fairclough also distinguished three stages of critical discourse analysis—*description* of text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social text (Fairclough, 2011). Figure 3.5 below is an illustration based on Fairclough’s analytical framework of CDA.

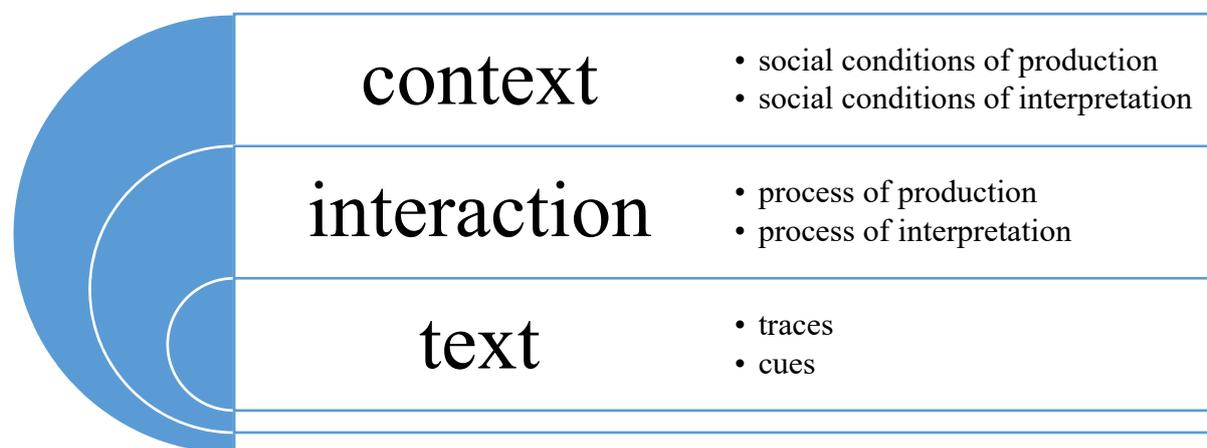


Figure 3.6 Analytical Framework of Critical Discourse Analysis

Source: Fairclough, 2015, p. 21

From Figure 3.5 above, there are three stages in CDA’s analytical framework, and the focus of these three stages is rather different. Firstly, the text “can be regarded from the perspective of

discourse analysis on the one hand as *traces* of the productive process, and on the other hand as *cues* in the process of interpretation” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 20). Secondly, the process of interaction comprises the processes of production and interpretation, which is not only cognitive, but is also determined by the social context—“they are socially generated, and their nature is dependent on the social relations and struggles out of which they were generated—as well as being socially transmitted and, in our society, unequally distributed” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 20). Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction by seeing the text as the product of the process of production and as a resource in the process of interpretation. This social context is made up of three levels of social conditions: the level of the social environment in which the discourse occurs; the level of social institution which constitutes the discourse; and the level of the society as a whole. Thirdly, context is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context, with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects. To summarize Fairclough’s analytical framework of CDA, analysis in the first stage limits its boundaries to labelling the formal properties of the text and regards the text as an object. In the second stage, CDA goes through the analysis of the cognitive process of the participants and their interactions. Finally, in the third stage, the aim is to explain the relationship between social events and social structures that affect these events and that are also affected by them.

Fairclough (1995) suggested that a complete CDA should include an analysis of the text’s “socio-cultural practice” or “the social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of” (p. 57). This level of analysis “may be at different levels of abstraction from the particular event: it may involve its more immediate situational context, the wider context of institutional practices the event is embedded within, or the yet wider frame of the society and the culture” (p. 62). According to Baker, et al. (2008), the analytical framework of CDA provided by Fairclough in 2015 “justifies the use of CDA rather than purely descriptive, data-driven approaches which are epistemologically inadequate in accounting for the complex linguistic choices made during the processes of text production” (p. 281). It is also worth mentioning that Baker argued that it is the power relationships in social institutions and society that determine how the orders of discourses are constructed and how ideologies are embodied in the discourses. In addition, audience also can influence the meanings of texts by reacting to a text in a wide range of different ways (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a).

### 3.4 The Combined Approach of CL and CDA

#### 3.4.1 *Limitations of CL*

Having discussed the advantages of the two approaches, this section discusses the limitations. CL is generally quantitative and focuses on the local text of the situation such as in concordance analysis (Sinclair, 1991). Therefore, pure corpus analysis is often said to lack explanatory and interpretive power since the in-depth exploration of context is usually not feasible with a large corpus. Methods in CL have been applied to the analysis of discourse-level phenomena such as “characteristics associated with the use of a language feature”, “realizations of a particular function”, “characterizing a variety of language” and “mapping the occurrences of a feature through entire texts” (Conrad, 2002, p. 75). As Mautner (2007) explains, “what large scale data are not well suited for [...] is making direct text-by-text links between the linguistic evidence and the contextual framework it is embedded in” (p. 65). This argument is then reinforced by Bednarek (2009), who asserts that “beyond its consideration of syntagms, large scale corpus linguistics usually has less to say about context, and the unfolding of meaning in texts (e.g., intratextual patterning)” (p. 20). Moreover, the focus of CL on frequent usages and repeated patterns may be done at the risk of losing out on the insights of outstanding singular texts that might have an impact on phylogenesis and ontogenesis, and whose relevance transcends ordinary singular texts that achieve their impact through repetition (Bednarek, 2009). The oversensitivity to frequency can also result in semiotic impoverishment (Mautner, 2009), whereby the results miss out on insights that absences or outliers in a corpus (i.e., what could have been said but was not) might reveal.

Baker (2006) also indicates that there are limitations inherent to corpus-based research methods. The main weakness for which CL is often criticized is that “it neglects the socio-cultural context of discourse owing to the large size of data and since the texts that constitute a corpus are invariably decontextualized examples of language use” (Baker, 2006, p. 25). For instance, the corpus can only ever reveal its own contents and procedures that foreground the frequency and saliency of various phenomena in the corpus. However, the corpus cannot reveal what is not there. For instance, in this study, using the two search terms “nǚ xìng” (female gender) and “fù nǚ” (women) only generated 40 articles in the Socialist era (1949–1978). This is because gender equality was implemented to the extreme, whereby any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006). Yang (1999) claimed that female gender was annihilated during

this era, which is later discussed in Chapter 7. Sometimes, the presence of data generated by CL means a great deal, which in this thesis is the representations of women; while the nonexistence of data, that is what is not represented regarding women, means an even greater deal. In this study, understanding and acceptance of the absence of female gender in the socialist era and the related social processes around it were a kind of naturalised discourse due to its absence. A corpus approach may help researchers to step outside their own discourses, albeit only to the extent to which alternative discourses are present (and discoverable via corpus methods) within the corpus (Baker, et al., 2008).

Baker, et al. (2008) summarized that CL has four limitations. Firstly, corpus-based analysis often has difficulty in dealing with interactive meaning generated by multimodal discourse like images and videos. For instance, Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002) explored the relationship between discourse and pictures of children's toys. Their findings showed that some meanings are also generated in non-verbal or visual interactions like the pictures on the packaging of the toys. Secondly, corpus data is "de-contextualized". When dealing with a large quantity of corpus data, it is impossible for analysts to understand social contextual information, or ideology and power relations, which are very important to the interpretation of the statistical results. Thirdly, word frequency and collocation do not necessarily reveal the ideology implied by the utterance, and other factors need to be considered, like the size and type of the corpus and contextual background. Fourthly, sometimes it is the under representation that does not appear in the data that may be more important or more analytical.

### 3.4.2 *Limitations of CDA*

In terms of methodological weakness, there are four main areas where CDA has been criticized. The first area where CDA has been criticized is choosing a biased selection of texts and categories for analysis (Stubbs, 1997; Orpin, 2005). All forms of analysis, being conducted by human beings, are inevitably subject to various biases as humans tend to demonstrate cognitive biases. These cognitive biases, along with many other biases, can impact on the way that researchers select data to analyse, interpret and explain. In their book *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes*, Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery (2013) point out that there are several forms of bias when doing CDA research. The first bias is negativity bias that was claimed by Baumeister. For example, people tend to pay more attention to negative rather than positive experiences (Baumeister, et al., 2001). The second bias is the exposure effect proposed by

Montoya, et al. (2017). They proposed that people develop preferences for things we are familiar with (Montoya, et al., 2017). The third bias is the in-group bias identified by Everett, Faber, and Crockett (2015). They identified that people are inclined to give preferential treatment to people who we perceive as being members of our own group ( Everett, Faber, and Crockett, 2015).

In addition, as aforementioned in Chapter 2, people live in different sociocultural societies and do not have the same experiences in life. Resultantly, they do not share the same social view, nor do they have access to the same kinds of knowledge about the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). In cases where researchers using CDA do not begin their analysis determined to prove a point, questions may still be raised about the extent to which they possess pre-existing positions or stances (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). This in turn may influence the way that the analysis is carried out. For example, in this study, if I am convinced that a certain newspaper is sexist, I may look through articles that reference gender inequality and then choose such articles that clearly do demonstrate sexism. Or, as another example, in an early stage of the analysis, I may have decided to overlook a large number of articles that present more positive representations of women. As a result, the analysis of the rest of the articles provides evidence of gender inequality. However, this finding is then biased because it is not generated through a scientific method. More importantly, the analysis may lead readers to infer that the data that was intentionally selected is representative of the attitudes expressed in the newspaper. In extreme cases, “cherry-picking” data may also result in a biased database (Magalhães, 2007), and thus the results proceeding from such data may be lacking in generalizability, replicability and reliability. Widdowson (2005) has therefore raised the concern that the analysis of CDA is shaped by the desired result, which is influenced by the researcher’s own political agenda (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a).

Secondly, the data size in CDA research has been criticized for usually being small (Clark, 2007). Small and arbitrarily selected texts will result in biased data. Such small data may also lack representativity, “or contain them in too small frequencies for results to be reliable, particularly when issues of statistical significance are not addressed” (Baker, et al., 2008, p. 275). Thus, the findings from such data may be lacking in generalizability, representability and reliability.

Thirdly, Widdowson (1996) has criticized CDA for its lack of academic and analytical rigour. Widdowson argued that the data analysis is highly informed by the analyst's subjective preconceptions and assumptions (see also Orpin, 2005).

Fourthly, Stubbs (1997) adds that the linguistic features in CDA research are rarely compared with norms in the actual language (see also Orpin, 2005). This means that CDA research may miss the opportunity to reflect the "finer shades of meaning and nuances in representation" (Duguid, 2010, p. 215).

CDA inevitably encapsulates the description of detailed linguistic features and involves the analysis of the linguistic realizations at a quantity level. However, CDA is incapable of concluding some generalizable and persuasive results due to the comparably small size of data and the researchers' subjectivity involved in the analysis (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). Besides, linguistic choices or patterns that run counter to intuitive prediction are thus identified and need to be accounted for. The potential in limiting bias, forcing the researcher to confront realities of frequency or saliency, is not to be underestimated. In addition, the emergence of big data stemming from the digitization of traditional media and the proliferation of new media makes it important for CDA studies to use innovation in managing and analysing data.

### 3.4.3 *The Synergy of CL and CDA*

Despite criticisms of CL and CDA, the synergy of these two approaches was first proposed in the 1990s, in papers such as Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2002), Mautner (2009), Partington (2004) and Stubbs (1997, 2001), demonstrating the utility of corpus approaches to the field of CDA. Stubbs (1997) argues that the combination of CDA and CL, specifically through using scientific sampling to analyse a large collection of text and to compare the textual features captured in a corpus, allows researchers to make reliable generalizations about typical language use. In recent works of literature, there have been more and more voices advocating the combination of CL and CDA as a methodological approach (Conrad, 2002; Mautner, 2007; Risdaneva, 2018, etc.). CDA and CL are complementary to each other, and when used in conjunction, they overcome the shortcomings of each other. CDA pays attention to both the macro-level of context through a top-down approach, and the micro-level by analysing how ideologies, dominance and power relations are expressed in language. In contrast, CL deals with large amounts of text by providing detailed information of the micro-level. CL is basically

a bottom-up approach, allowing the data generated in a corpus to take the lead, and thereby limits bias. The data generated by corpus analytical tools in CL is not handpicked data selected by the analyst, it is typical and representative linguistic patterns that have been extracted from a large amount of data.

The synergy of CL and CDA has been employed since the mid-1990s. Nartey and Mwinlaaru separate the development of this synergy into three phases. The first phase was before 1995, as both CDA and CL were still in the development phase, building up their ground. “During this period, researchers in each field of research, as it were, were pre-occupied with establishing the tenets and principles of the respective frameworks, making a synthesis between them an unlikely occurrence (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019, pp. 8–9)”. The second phase was from 1995 to 2011. During this time, the publication by Baker, et al. (2008) marked a milestone in the development of the synergy of CL and CDA. Baker, et al. (2008) applied this synergy to the study of the media’s representation of refugees in the UK over a ten-year period (1996–2005), drawing on a large corpus of 140 million words, and putting this approach firmly on the research agenda of the applied language sciences. The combined approach of CL and CDA used by Baker, et al. (2008) has since been replicated and extended. After 2011, which is the third phase, the synergy of CL and CDA began to gain momentum, when scholars in the field began to test this synergy in various situations. According to Nartey and Mwinlaaru, huge number of studies published adopting the synergy, with majority of the studies were based directly on Baker, et al. (2008) with little or no modification, attributing to the view of Baker, et al.’s (2008) publication. This study follows Baker, et al.’s (2008) approach, combining the quantitative corpus-based forms of analysis with the qualitative CDA. Baker’s (2006) framework for the synergy of CL and CDA contains a number of stages and involves moving back and forth between quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis, with each stage informing the next stage and aiding the creation of new hypotheses. This framework combining CL and CDA for data analysis is thus cyclical and potentially endless:

- (1) Context-based analysis of the topic in relation to history, politics, culture, and etymology. Identify existing topoi, discourses, and strategies via wider reading.
- (2) Establish research questions and corpus-building procedures.
- (3) Corpus analysis of frequencies, clusters, keywords, dispersion, and so forth. Identify potential sites of interest in the corpus along with possible discourses, topoi, strategies; relate potential sites of interest to existing theories in the literature.

- (4) Qualitative or CDA analysis of a smaller, representative set of data (e.g., concordances of certain lexical items or of a particular text or set of texts within the corpus); identify discourses, topoi, and strategies.
- (5) Formulation of new hypotheses or research questions.
- (6) Further corpus analysis based on new hypotheses; identify further discourses, topoi, and strategies.
- (7) Analysis of intertextuality or interdiscursivity based on findings from corpus analysis.
- (8) New hypotheses formulated based on the findings.
- (9) Further corpus analysis, identify additional discourses, topoi, and strategies.

In this way, CL and CDA approaches are combined. Baker's framework that combines CL and CDA (2006), and Fairclough's analytical framework for CDA (2015) are then adapted and adjusted for the purpose of this study. The research procedures for this study included the following steps:

- (1) Identify different social-historical time eras. Context-based analysis of each historical era in terms of politics, culture, ideologies and social power structure. Identify existing topoi, discourses, and strategies via wider reading. Position women in the media landscape by examining women's representations in the media in each era.
- (2) Establish research questions and corpus-building procedures.
- (3) Corpus analysis of word sketches, frequencies, keywords, article dispersion, and so forth. Identify potential sites of interest in the corpus along with possible discourses, topoi, and strategies; relate potential sites of interest to existing theories in the literature.
- (4) Qualitative or CDA analysis of a smaller, representative set of data (e.g., concordances of certain lexical items or of a particular text or set of texts within the corpus). Sketch Engine provides not only segmented data, but also full articles as well. Hence, it is possible to read through full text if needed to examine the context.
- (5) Formulation of new hypotheses or research questions. Further corpus analysis based on new hypotheses; identify further discourses, topoi, and strategies.
- (6) Repeat step (5) if needed.
- (7) Further corpus analysis, identify additional discourses, topoi, and strategies until results are obtained.
- (8) Describe and interpret the data. Discuss the relationship between the representations of women that were found and the prevailing ideologies at that time.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the methodological framework that was employed in this research. Decisions and procedures that were undertaken regarding the data description, data collection

criteria, sampling, corpus construction, and the linguistic tool and techniques employed were provided. This was then followed by a discussion of the two approaches used—CL and CDA. The limitations of these two approaches and why the synergy of combining the two has gathered momentum was then explained. Having contextualised the research problem, formulated the research questions, examined guiding theories and proposed the research method, Chapter 4 provides contextual background for this study by delineating key events in China's historical development and dominant ideologies that are relevant to this study in the four historical eras. Most importantly, Chapter 4 positions women in the media landscape of these four eras.

## Chapter 4 Women, History, and Ideology

During the research time period of this study, 1872 – 2012, China went through the Imperial late Qing Dynasty, the Republican, the communist socialist and the neoliberal post-socialist eras. Alongside the most dramatic social cultural shifts and political transformations, were alterations in the dominant ideologies. All these time-related and ideologically rooted historical eras have influenced women's representations and the re-construction of women's roles. The hegemonic definition of Chinese women documented in the newspapers has continuously been renewed, recreated, defended and modified.

This 140-year period is also the time that China was forced to complete modernisation. As Rofel (1999) suggests, in China, modernity is often associated with notions of gender, and a modern woman adheres to a blend of traditional and westernised standards. As discussed in Chapter 2, the position of women as oppressed in the patriarchal society has been reproduced and maintained by the aid of ideological practice via the media which is used to integrate ideology into everyday life through aggressive information campaigns. Modern nation-state relies on the media to implant national consciousness and values, articulating identity as a ubiquitous and often part of everyday experience that influences other identities (Hall, 1997), including women. This also agrees with the ideological theories that the dominant ideologies hidden in the media reflect the interests of a ruling group discussed in Chapter 2 (Gramsci, 2014; Marx, 1978).

In addition, the temporal connection of women's representations and roles in China are in the context of changing ideologies and cultures. Hence, in order to reveal the hidden ideologies and uncover how women's representation has changed when a new prevailing ideology has achieved dominance, it is worthwhile to elaborate further on the changes of history and ideology in China, as well as positioning women in the media for each historical time era. This chapter delineates key contours of historical development directly relevant to this case study, and illustrates the historical trajectory of women's representations in China in these 140 years. The chapter has five sections, each of the first four sections covers a time era the same as the sub-corpora (see Chapter 3). In these four sections, three aspects are expounded: (1) key events

affecting women's representations which are held up as "epochal" and thus representative; (2) social cultural background and the dominant ideology; (3) the media landscape during the era and the positioning of women in it. Section five concludes this chapter.

## **4.1 The Late Qing Era (1872- 1911): Emerging of Women's Emancipation Movement**

### *4.1.1 Key Events*

A series of wars in the Late Qing Era shattered the dream of Chinese people being the "Celestial Empire 天朝上国". The Qing Dynasty, now reeling from decades of struggle and unrest, knew that it had to change to keep pace with the modern world. In the wake of these external defeats, literati and the ruling class made great efforts, intending to establish a modern and strong nation. Known as the Qing Restoration or Tongzhi Restoration (named for the Tongzhi Emperor) which began around 1860, the aim was to reinvigorate the Dynasty and restore the traditional order (Fairbank and Goldman, 2006). Women were placed right at the center of the restoration, and granted the responsibility to produce a stronger next generation and save the nation.

Various defeats made it difficult for the Qing government to maintain its reign. In 1905, the Qing government announced the abolition of the 1300-year-old imperial examination system. This is one of the most important but the most overlooked events in Chinese modern history. Under the urgent stimulation and oppression of modernisation, the fundamental system that had been passed down for thousands of years in China had lost its foundation to exist, consequently the impact was not only on education, but on the entire society. As a way for students to be promoted, the imperial examination system shouldered the fundamental function of social hierarchical mobilisation (Elman, 2013). Without the imperial examination system, and the new system not yet set up in this troubled time, disorders, gentry, local tyrants, and bullies could easily gain control of the locality, making China's modernisation more difficult.

In this era, the Qing government did make some important decisions about modernising its economy and its governmental system, and tried a whole variety of experiments to save the nation, for instance, the promotion of nationalism, and the adoption of Western technological and diplomatic innovation and so forth. To finance these projects, the self-strengtheners set up money-making enterprises. To meet demands, modern education was introduced and although poorly organized, the combined effect of modern commerce, industry, and education in the late Qing Era led to major diversification and enrichment of the Chinese elites (Brown, 2020), who

were now poised for greater say in the polity. When their demands were not satisfied, they deserted the Qing Court. The Wuchang Uprising on the 10 October 1911 emulated by a series of uprisings over weeks and months in the autumn and winter of 1911. The Qing Dynasty had lost all power, and the 2000-year-old imperial system collapsed. This led to the creation of a new central government, the Republic of China, in Nanjing with Sun Yat-sen (1866 -1925) as its provisional leader. All the efforts and reforms of self-strengthening in the late Qing had laid the foundation for modern China. Consequently, all these drastic social cultural changes affected women's lives.

#### 4.1.2 *Social-cultural Background and the Mainstream Ideology*

This research investigates how the dominant ideology influenced the media's representation of women. Thus, it is necessary to examine the dominant ideologies in each historical era in detail. The construction of obedient and chaste women has its deep roots in traditional Chinese culture. Engels pinned the reason for gender inequality to productivity and the possession of production means (Marx, 1978). In addition, class oppression is another contributor, intertwined with gender oppression. However, class oppression cannot be equated with gender oppression, as I discuss in the following chapters. Low status men are oppressed by higher classes, and women are oppressed by men as well as higher classes.

In the late Qing Era, the dominant ideology was Confucianism. It is widely acknowledged that the Confucian philosophical system has influenced the behaviour and social relationships of Chinese people. Confucianism has been the dominant ideology on Chinese gender discourse for over two thousand years, and the time-honoured Confucian ethics of "Women are inferior to men" were widely acknowledged as the natural law. Confucianism is a key lens to understand the historical phenomenon of "obedient and chaste women". Scholars have argued that the horrific oppression and denigration of Chinese women in this era and the two millennia before were a direct result of Confucianism (Rosenlee, 2006). In the context of the strict age and gender based hierarchical relationships of the Confucian social order, Confucianism promotes the idea of gender inequality and patriarchy (Bleeker and Widengren, 1971; Stacey, 1983). There is little description of women in the Confucian Four Books (Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects, and Mencius) and Five Classics (Classics of Poetry, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, I Ching or Book of Changes, and Spring and Autumn Annuals), which is another proof of the concept of Tuchman's *symbolic annihilation* discussed in the

section *Under Presentation* in Chapter 2. This little description of women is pejorative mostly. For example, from Analects Book 17 Verse 23: “The Master said: Of all people, girls and servants are the most difficult to behave to. If you are familiar with them, they lose their humility. If you maintain a reserve towards them, they are discontented (Legge, 1930a, p.271)”.

Confucian patriarchy was based, in part, on a belief in the moral inferiority of women; a pivotal part of Confucianism is the affirmation of accepted values and norms of behaviour in social relations and institutions. One should fulfil one’s duty and role. With each one acting rightly and dutifully, a perfect society will be formed. Due to the “*nei-wai*” (in-out) gender distinction system, women are to act in *nei* (in)—the private domestic domain, and men in *wai* (out)—the public social domain, neither of whom are permitted to transgress the other’s space (Rosenlee 2006, p. 69). According to The Book of Rites, one of the Five Classics of Confucianism, women were subject to the authority of male figures in their family (father, husband, son) throughout their lives, which is known as the Three Obediences of Woman: Woman is a follower (从). When she is young, she follows her father, when she gets married, she follows her husband, when her husband dies she follows her son. In each of the three types of obedience, men are invariably the ones who women are supposed to obey.

After the Qing Dynasty (BC 207), a “virtuous and chaste woman” became an integral part of the Chinese traditional gender discourse, with the highest virtue expected of women being self-sacrifice to men. From early teens, a girl would learn to be modest, chaste, passive and submissive (Knapp, 2012). Pan Chao (AD 32 – 102), a poet, historian, and moralist of the Han Dynasty (BC 202 – AD 220), stipulated that a virtuous woman should be obedient, quiet, self-effacing and ignorant, devoting herself only to the service of the family (Pan, 1996). In Song (960 - 1279) and Ming (1368 - 1662) Dynasties, the Neo Confucianism, which is a moral, ethical, and metaphysical Chinese philosophy influenced by Confucianism, denied women’s basic human rights (De Bary, 1989). For examples, fallacies like “starving to death is small, misconduct is huge” were promoted. Therefore, scholars’ summarise that there is no gender equality in traditional Confucianism. On the contrary, Confucianism is considered as assisting oppression against women in ancient Chinese society, which should be thoroughly criticised and discarded.

However, many scholars take a positive perspective of Confucianism on women, trying to reinterpret the relationship between Confucianism and gender equality, and to understand the

significance of Confucianism on contemporary life. Among these scholars, the views of Confucius on women are merely a reflection of the prevailing ideas at the time, and the views on women are far from mainstream Confucianism. Some scholars further argue that Confucianism contains the germination of gender equality. For example, Pre Qin Confucianism, especially the thought of Yin-Yang complementarity (women as *yin* and men as *yang*) and harmony between heaven and earth (men as heaven and women as earth) in the *Book of Changes*, also known as *I Ching*, all contain the basic affirmation of the value of women (Zhu, 2018). Heaven and earth embrace harmoniously and perfectly interact: this constitutes the image of Peace (Lynn, 1970), which resembles the fact that both men and women are needed to constitute this world. According to the cosmology of the *Book of Changes*, “The reciprocal process of *yin* and *yang* is called the Dao (also as Tao, the Way). That which allows the Dao to continue to operate is human goodness, and that which allows it to bring things to completion is human nature [xing] (Lynn, 1970, p. 53)”. One *yin* and one *yang* compose the Dao (yi yin yi yang wei zhi dao), which is One; ultimate reality is an integrated whole: A flourishing nature (of any kind) includes Yin-Yang in harmonious unity. Because *yin* and *yang* are equally good, men and women are equally good. Woman’s ontological status, therefore, is equivalent to man’s. From this, scholars have concluded that the Confucian tradition does not deny the fundamental value of women as human beings. Hence, scholars have argued that Confucianism does not deny the fundamental value of women (Zhang, 2019; Li, 2020).

Confucianism was the product of that particular historical time period of pre-Qin. The doctrines were capable of guiding ancient Chinese society in the sociohistorical situation of the time. However, Confucianism failed to adapt and conform to later social development after the Qin-Han period, hence, it was limited for explaining all the social practices that emerged after its time due to the sociohistorical situation.

#### 4.1.3 *Media Landscape and the Position of Women*

As far as the media landscape of the late Qing Era is concerned, a series of military, political and diplomatic failures triggered the intellectuals’ appeal for a modern nation, and fledging capitalism required a free and democratic external environment (Fairbank and Goldman, 2006). Modern newspapers were set up the role of the media being to promote reforms in China. Under Western influence, the organic intellectuals as noted by Gramsci (discussed in Chapter 2), led by Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao (1873 - 1929), arguably the most influential

cultural leaders and the most important reformist thinkers of the late Qing Era, began to run newspapers to advocate reforms, such as, *New Record of Yangcheng Mining* (1872, Guangzhou), *Zhaowen Xinbao* (1873, Hankou), *Circular Daily* (1874, Hong Kong), *Report* (1874, Shanghai), *Shubao* (1884, Guangzhou), *Zhongwai Jiwen* (1895 Beijing), and the *Qiang Xue Bao* (1896 Shanghai). Between 1896 and 1898, 105 new Chinese newspapers and periodicals emerged (Mittler, 2004). After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, the Revolutionists represented by Sun Yat-sen (1866 - 1925) replaced the Reformists represented by Kang and Liang, and Sun Yat-sen became the main leader of the national hope. In 1900, Sun Yat-sen founded two newspapers, *China Daily* and *Min Bao*, the latter being the official newspaper of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Articles in *Min Bao* systematically explained the "Three Principles of the People", which is the ideological basis of the political program of the KMT. After overthrowing the Qing Dynasty and establishing the Republic of China in 1911, *New Youth* was launched. In the following year, more than 400 newspapers and periodicals containing new thoughts and new ideas were published in various places in China. Intellectuals were eager to use newspapers to promote ideas of social innovation and reshape national identity, including the newly constructed identity of women (Judge, 2006).

The first seed of consciousness on women came in the late Qing Era, together with the introduction of various western ideas, including western feminism. These western ideas provided a stimulus for cultural fermentation as well as underpinning the rise of women's public status. The core concept of western feminism – that of gender equality – was formally introduced to China in the late Qing era (Brownell and Wasserstrom, 2002). Gender equality is the total opposite of Chinese gender practice. Coming from a group of men – the reformers in the late 19th century, a series of Self-strengthening Movements were initiated, including the Chinese Women's Emancipation Movement through campaigns such as "Ban to the foot-binding" and "Support women's schooling". Figures 4.1 shows domestic women in 1901 and 4.2 shows girls in state schools receiving modern education in 1893. Liang continued to suggest in his *Proposals for Women's Education* in 1896 that the ultimate aim was to build a strong nation and that to achieve this, women needed to be educated and financially independent (Liang, 1896). Meanwhile the emergence of women's newspapers and journals – *nü bao xue*, *Women's Newspaper* issued in 1902 in Shanghai, magazine of *nü zi shi jie*, *Women's World* founded in 1904 by Ding Chuwo, *bei jing nü bao*, *Beijing Women's Newspaper* issued in 1905,

*zhong guo nü bao*, *Chinese Women's Newspaper* founded in 1907 by Qiu Jin – further symbolises the awakening of women's awareness in China (Xu, 2015).

As China became aware of the inequality-patriarchy perspective on gender and feminism that had already taken place in the West (Brownell and Wasserstrom, 2002), the problems inherent in the traditional concepts of women's roles in Chinese society came to the fore as part of a critical evaluation of the family by the reformers as “a pillar of the old oppressive social order” (Andors, 1983, p. 58). Women's issues were one of the central debates for both public and scholarly discourse in the newspapers. Women's representation was, at this time, defined primarily in narrow institutional political terms because the necessity and importance for in-depth and far-reaching social reforms was to support the nation in finding its way to salvation. In a direct response to the slogans of “fighting for women's rights” and “emancipation of personality” in the movement, there were quite a number of women's images appearing in works of literature struggling to shake off the bonds of Confucian ideology (Hershatter and Zheng, 2008a). These changes in women's roles were not well understood by most Chinese intellectuals and especially by Chinese women (Andors, 1983). The Women's Movement in the late Qing Era was generally considered “male feminism”. As claimed by some Chinese scholars, this localisation process was not a natural process of integrating the socio-cultural factors in China, but an abnormal transformation of gender – neutralised or masculinised femininity – in a series of national revolutions (Yang, 2004). These anti-imperialism, anti-Confucianism, nationalist, and intellectual movements were aimed at rescuing and regenerating the nation.



Figure 4.1 Women at Home in 1901

Source: [kknews.cc/history/262vykg.html](http://kknews.cc/history/262vykg.html)



Figure 4.2 Girl students in classroom at Zhangpu, Fujian Province in 1893

Source:  
[new.qq.com/rain/a/20200818A0N4LR00](http://new.qq.com/rain/a/20200818A0N4LR00)

## 4.2 Republican (1912- 1949): A Top-down Emancipation Movement

### 4.2.1 Key Events

The Republican era is usually referred to as the First Democratic Republic in China after the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, as it was the first time China had ever experimented with Parliamentary Constitutionalism. After the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, China declares itself a republic in 1912 with Sun Yat-sen as the provisional president; he later resigns in favour of Yuan Shihkai. Sun subsequently founds the Nationalist Party, also known as Kuomintang (KMT). The Republican era can be further divided into three sub eras: Warlord Era (1912-1928), Nanjing Era (1928 - 1937) and the Japanese Invasion Era (1937 - 1949). It begins with the Beiyang decades of 1912 to 1927, also known as the Warlord Era, ruled by the so-called Northern regime in Beijing. In this era, Yuan attempts to reinstate the monarchy but fails and, after his death in 1916, the country is left without a strong central leader, shifting alliances between regional warlords who fought for control of the Beijing government. The Warlord Era is followed by the Nanjing Era led by the Nationalist government with KMT in power, based in the capital city of Nanjing in 1928. This was later disrupted by a full-scale Japanese invasion in 1937—the Invasion Era.

The Republican era tried one way or another to work out how the problems of increased military strife within the country and imperialist attacks from outside could be dealt with, and

fought back against. On the one side, the Republican era is an age of unprecedented cosmopolitanism, the origin of modernity and liberalism in China. On the other side, it is full of political disorder, economic dislocation, and profound national weakness and humiliation at the hands of Western imperialism and later Japanese invasion. National disintegration and civil strife seemed to have become the norm of the three sub-Republican eras with no single government having effective control over the whole of China. Among the constant unrest, the Women's Emancipation Movement was again secondary to the nation's preservation.

The most significant event in the Republican era is the May Fourth Movement (1917 to 1923, also known as the New Culture Movement), which happened because of a series of humiliating defeats. In 1915, the Japanese set before the Warlord government in Beijing the so-called Twenty-One Demands, which would have made China a Japanese protectorate. Furthermore, later in 1917, China declared war on Germany in the hope of recovering its Shandong province. However, in 1918, the Beijing government signed a secret deal with Japan accepting Japan's claim to Shandong province. When the Paris peace conference of 1919 confirmed the Japanese claim to Shandong and Beijing's sellout became public, internal reaction was shattering. On 4<sup>th</sup> May 1919, there were massive student demonstrations against the Beijing government and Japan. The political fervor, student activism, and iconoclastic and reformist intellectual currents set in motion by the patriotic student protest developed into a national awakening. According to Rey Chow (1986, p. 71), May Fourth Movement is "understood not only as the day in 1919 when students in Beijing protested against the Chinese government's self-compromising policies toward Japan and triggered a series of uprisings throughout the country, but as the entire era in early twentieth-century China in which Chinese people of different social classes, all inspired by patriotic sentiments, were eager to reevaluate tradition in the light of science and democracy and to build a new nation." May Fourth Movement also called for gender equality; an end to polygamy and arranged marriages, and access to higher education for women, which still inspire Chinese women today.

In 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is founded in Shanghai. Mao Zedong leads the Long March and establishes revolutionary headquarters in Yan'an. Civil war (1945-1949) between the Nationalists (KMT) and the Communists (CCP) results in the Communists' victory. In 1949, CCP came into power and the KMT evacuated to the island of Taiwan.

#### 4.2.2 *Social Cultural Background and the Mainstream Ideology*

With the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, Confucianism was officially abandoned as a guiding ideology. Confucianism had been at the core of the Chinese belief system since the Han Dynasty; as the spiritual pillar of the entire society, and the constitution for the legitimate rule of the dominant class. After the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, the Qing Dynasty, the last imperial power in Chinese history, collapsed and the ideology of the socially dominating class also completely disintegrated. Confucianism and the traditional political system in China were tightly connected, so the collapse of the imperial system inevitably brought about the decline of Confucianism. The abolition of the imperial examination system, the disintegration of the imperial system, and the decline of the patriarchal family fundamentally shook the basis of social construction and its ideology. People firmly believed that China needed innovation, and women's roles defined by Confucianism needed to be condemned. Learning Western ideas and practice, including Western feminist ideas and practice, and criticising traditional Chinese culture had become the reality at this time.

When discussing the dominant ideologies during the Republican era, the most important aspect is the resistance that Chinese intellectuals and elites encountered and the desire to rebuild the modern country. In the first sub era of the Republican era, the Warlord Era, Chinese politics had been in turbulence. The practice of KMT party politics at the beginning of the Republic of China was neither under the full guidance of the Three Principles of the People, nor did it localise the Western democratic political system. Therefore, although various political manifesto or party programmes were published, there was a general lack of ideological support (Brown, 2020). Hence, capitalism cannot be seen as the dominant ideology in this time period for KMT. Contrary to this, the CCP seized the trend of counter-traditional ideology after the end of the Qing Dynasty; explored the ideological resources for social mobilisation and spiritual reconstruction in various folk cultures, and creatively combined them with the imported Marxist-Leninist doctrines, thereby laying the solid foundation for the ongoing revolution (Sluga, 2013).

Despite the ideological dispute between KMT and CCP, the fundamental starting point was to make China rise again. The author of this thesis argues that the prevailing ideology in practice in the Republican era is mainly nationalism. Glenda Sluga notes that “The twentieth century, a time of profound disillusionment with nationalism, was also the great age of globalism” (Sluga,

2013, p. 7). Scholars frequently place the beginning of nationalism in the late 18th century or early 19th century. Nationalism as a concept was firmly established by the 19th century (Zaide, 1983; Calhoun, 1993; Zimmer, 2003). Nationalism is both a political movement and an ideology (Fuchs, 2020), that justifies the building and maintenance of nation-states. It creates a political and cultural outside / inside, that is, us / them, and emphasises loyalty, devotion, or allegiance to a nation-state and holds that such obligations outweigh other individual or group interests. Besides nationalism, another important consensus worth mentioning is that people firmly believed that China needed innovation. Learning Western ideas and technology, and criticising traditional Chinese culture had become the reality at this time. These thoughts combined constitute the dominant ideologies in the Republican era. Women's discourse in the Republican era was dominated by nationalism discourse.

#### 4.2.3 *Media Landscape and the Position of Women*

In the Republican era, the most novel ideas (like suffrage for women and women's participation in politics), and the most stubborn traditions (like household works are women's born duties) coexisted. The fertile Republican cosmopolitanism thrived in this era when East and West converged and collided. After the Xinhai Revolution, the *Interim Constitution* was promulgated, which clearly declared the protection of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. At the same time, Western powers were busy with the First World War and had no time meddling in the East. Against this background, there were a large number of newspapers and journal periodicals emerging in China. From 1912 to 1915, more than 500 new newspapers and periodicals were published across the country, from the coast to the inland (Harris, 2018). The content was becoming more and more diversified. Political theory, reviews, news, even commercial information were all valued. The targeted readership of newspapers was gradually expanding (Yang, 2004). Newspapers with different political stances such as revolutionaries and reformers debated each other, and public opinion was expressed more openly and freely to a certain extent.

It was this civic openness of the Republican era that codified the media discourse at the time. Benedict Anderson (1991) argued that the rise of the modern press or print capitalism had been the catalyst for the spread of modern nationalist movements as imagined communities. Concerning the Republican era, it has been argued that the creation of a new politically active press created a mediating "public space" that made possible the revolutions and movements

(MacKinnon, 1997; Judge, 2006). Liang Qichao and others argued early on that freedom of expression and an independent judiciary were essential to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy in China (Liang, 1997).

However, newspapers had also been utilised to play a negative and illegitimate role in hindering the revolution progress (Judge, 2015). During the Republican era, connection between the modern press and political power as part of the process of state building was enhanced, terrorising the opposition press, and many journals and newspapers were shut down. MacKinnon claimed that (MacKinnon, 1997) once in power Chinese revolutionary nationalists often traded defence of freedom of expression for heavy-handed censorship and propaganda. There would be the mixture of censorship and propaganda exercised on the media by the Chinese state - be it regional or national in scope. *Propaganda* (*Xuān chuán* 宣传) as a term and concept had only recently acquired pejorative connotations. State censorship and propaganda in its more contemporary forms appeared to disseminate the government's agenda and ideology.

Against the contextual background previously discussed, women became one of these symbols through which the new regime was understood and manifest; the public space of this new regime served as a proper field upon which Republican womanhood could be realised (Judge 2015, p.50). The media of the Republican time mainly focused on urban educated women, shown by Figure 4.3. Other than the "New Women" movement advocated by KMT, since the 1920s, CCP had organised the Women Worker's Movement with pertinent public debates and propaganda, which made working-class women visible, however, it was a minor influence due to the CCP's lack of political power at the time. Together with the movement of urban educated women, mainly under the influence of the KMT, the working-class Women's Movement under the influence of the CCP constituted the two strands of women's movements. Women in the Republican era, just like women in the Late Qing Era, were redefined by the patriarchal society, in order to save China. Figure 4.4 shows a Women Death Squad in Shanghai in the Republican era, when women were encouraged to die for the nation.



Figure 4.3 Women in the Republican Era

Source:  
[www.sohu.com/a/235637858\\_99925789](http://www.sohu.com/a/235637858_99925789)



Figure 4.4 Shanghai Women Death Squad in 1920

Source: [zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/37581509](http://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/37581509)

### 4.3 Socialist Era (1950 – 1978): the State Controlled Women

#### 4.3.1 Key Events

Mao Zedong (1893 - 1976) proclaiming the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 marked the beginning of the socialist era. In 1950, a new marriage law banned polygamy and arranged marriages, promoting women’s equal rights and encouraging freedom of choice in selecting a spouse. The Agrarian Reform Law redistributed the land of landlords and wealthy farmers to millions of peasants.

Under Mao Zedong’s leadership, China adopted Marxism and Soviet-style planned economy with rigid government control. 1953, Mao began Rural Collectivisation based on a five-year plan. Individual landownership was abolished and replaced with cooperatives. With the purpose of accelerating economic development, Mao Zedong created a new system, that he called the “Great Leap Forward” (1958-1960). The “Great Leap Forward” plan called for an unrealistic increase in industrial and agricultural production. All land was collectivised and farmers organised into People’s Communes. The diversion of unskilled labour to industrial and infrastructure projects, the lack of personal incentives, and the appearance of regional droughts and floods led to a sharp drop in grain production, which resulted in one of the largest famines in Chinese history (Meisner, 1999).

In the “Great Leap Forward” movement, peasants were instructed to make steel. In addition, in the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” movement (1966-1976), skilled workers and the

educated youth were sent to the countryside to work in the fields. China's jurisdiction, research and educational systems were paralysed. Student bands of "Red Guards" searched and destroyed anything considered bourgeois—anything representing capitalism, religion, tradition and the West, or anything that is not Mao. Most of China's cultural heritage was destroyed and Mao's rivals within the party were purged. Intellectuals and people with "counter-revolutionary" backgrounds were dragged from their homes to endure fatal "struggle sessions", or sent to labour camps or custodial work units. The promotion of the Cultural Revolution of the public sphere over the private sphere and the conflation of femininity and the bourgeois had significant implications for women, as women had traditionally inhabited the private sphere (Yang and Yan, 2017).

With Mao Zedong's death in September of 1976, the Central Committee of the Political Bureau of CCP decided to end the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination was re-introduced, which ended the policy of only admitting people into higher education with a farming, factory and military background during 1971-1977. Educated women had a fair chance of being admitted to universities. In 1978, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 46 guaranteed freedom of religion but with a number of restrictions. Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) came into power in December 1978, and China entered the post-socialist era. Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernisations programme (agriculture, industry, defence and science) was instituted as a form of Chinese socialism which paved the way to the later economic reforms. The focus of China changed from political class struggle to economic development and the social situation in which women lived changed dramatically once again.

#### 4.3.2 *Social Cultural Background and the Mainstream Ideology*

One can argue that the fundamental ideology underlying the political activities in socialist China has been simply a continuation of Marxist-Leninist theories. However, I argue that Maoist ideology is the dominating ideology which was employed to accomplish social development and to entail rapid, massive and often violent changes. Maoist ideology was much influenced by the work of Karl Marx, especially the concept of class and the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of "putting politics in command" (Croll, 1983). Expanding the Marxist economic conception of class, Mao denounced class privilege with a view to promoting an egalitarian ideology eradicating labour exploitation by transforming private ownership of capitalism into

public ownership of communism (Wang, 2020). To achieve rapid change, politically conscious masses and loyal cadres underwent thought reform to follow Mao's ideology (Ogden, 1989).

Because of the highly oppressive political regulations, political ideology dominated all public discourse. Other voices, including the gender discourse, were either marginalised or completely eliminated (Yang and Yan, 2017). Women might have enjoyed social power as Maoist leaders however, they lacked the autonomous sexuality derived from an individuated female consciousness. The Communists viewed themselves not only as engaging in a class war but also in social liberation (Wang, 2005). "Women hold up half the sky" was a favourite epigram of Mao (1956) who claimed that women formed a great resource of labour power in China and that this group should be tapped into in the struggle to construct a great socialist country in 1956. The Party integrated peasant liberation and women's liberation into a joint force to fight against the common abusers: intellectuals, landlords and the privileged class. This collectivist tradition was bolstered by Maoist ideology, which subordinates individual interests to the higher interests of party, class and state (Wang, 1997). As a result, the relationship between the individual and the nation was absolutely nation-oriented, with the characteristic of strong patriotism and collectivism.

#### 4.3.3 *Media Landscape and the Position of Women*

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the newspaper industry basically stopped being organisation owned or business owned as was the case previously in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republican eras. Instead, they were incorporated into the national system, and became state owned where institutions controlled the publications' content and dissemination (Zhang, 1993). The mass media could only disseminate works that conformed to mainstream ideology, because all our newspapers, journals and books should be used to educate the people in the spirit of communism. In the previous two historical eras, intellectuals established a form of cooperation and communication through newspapers and periodicals to complete their dream of a new nation-state. In the socialist era, newspapers have been incorporated into the state power system to complete the dream of a socialist China (Li, 2017).

After 1949, among the major principles of Marxist thought vigorously promoted by Mao was the idea that "the degree of woman's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation" (Anon, n.d.) (Wang, 1997). The Communist Party's official line since 1949 has been actively pro equality for women, particularly in the economic and political arenas (Croll,

1983). Despite the difficulties of implementing this policy within the patriarchal Chinese society, visible changes have indeed occurred in the status of Chinese women since the Communist Revolution (Croll, 1983). In order to promote equality between men and women, the state has formulated policies and legislation, and safeguarded their implementation. Furthermore, since early in the days of the Maoist revolutions and movements, these changes have been touted as having enabled Chinese women to enjoy a much higher level of equality with men than their Western counterparts (“Govt. White Papers - china.org.cn,” n.d. The Situation of Chinese Women)(Dong, 1995). Chinese women’s economy and political position had been greatly improved and the Chinese women’s employment rate was the highest in the world at the time (Wang, 2005).

However, women were actively inducted into the public labour force by the CCP and were immersed into the highly politicised nature of life. At this time, the drive toward gender equality was implemented to the extreme; the previous division between public and domestic spheres was removed. Femininity or any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006). State propaganda featured the strong, brave, and technically-skilled “iron girls”. Showing interest in love or sex was treated either as “shameful expressions of a warped mind” or as “evidence of bourgeois individualism and are thus detrimental to the collective welfare” (Evans, 1997, p. 107). Femininity in its entirety was erased, and masculinity became the universal gender for all revolutionary comrades (Honig, 2003).

The Women’s Liberation Movement in this era was usually seen as a result of social mobility, being an integral part of national construction rather than advancement through an autonomous women’s movement. In other words, women’s liberation movements were mostly led by the protagonists of the national revolutions – men, and women were reformed to be the “same” as men (Wang, 1999). The class struggle was given priority on the grounds that without the establishment of a new political and economic system there could be “no substance to women’s liberation” (Croll, 2013, p.331). Some scholars (Song, 2013b) argue that, as a subordinate theme to the class struggle, women’s liberation in the socialist era did not touch the essence of women’s suppression of historical socio-cultural factors and consequently Chinese women’s liberation was regarded as an “unfinished liberation” (Xu, 2015, p. 33).

The patriotic role of women was articulated clearly in terms of their economic, political, and social responsibilities. The state-run newspapers dutifully reported and portrayed their part in

labour and production and as a consequence, the personal aspects of women’s lives (as mothers, daughters, and wives) were ignored or promptly neglected by the press. In accordance with Mao’s often-repeated adage that “women hold up half the sky”, Chinese women were expected to play an active role in building the nation (Wallis, 2006). Women are considered the same as men in order to shoulder the duty to build socialism, ignoring the biological difference. Some scholars believed that the deeply embedded cultural and structural impediments to true gender equality were never eliminated (Stacey, 1983; Wolf, 1985). The emphasis is on the gender equality of obligations to contribute to the nation, rather than the equal rights.

Scholars have often used *state feminism* to name women’s liberation movements in the socialist era. According to Wang Zheng *state feminism* has been adopted in academic discussions of the “Chinese socialist state’s gender policies but with a significant twist. When applied to China it often portrays a paradoxical image of a state patriarch championing women’s liberation, although with vacillation and inconsistency” (Wang, 2005, p. 519). State feminism not only fundamentally broke from the practice of the Women’s Liberation Movement in China before 1949, but also detached itself from the globalisation process of importing the theories and practices from the West. In addition, state feminism in the socialist Era is not closely related to practices and theories in the post-socialist era either.



Figure 4.5 The “iron girl” squad in Kailuan, July 1975

Source: [kknews.cc/zh-sg/news/4xjxlrq.html](http://kknews.cc/zh-sg/news/4xjxlrq.html)



Figure 4.6 Chinese Red Guards in 1966

Source: [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/11/the-cultural-revolution-50-years-on-all-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-political-convulsion](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/11/the-cultural-revolution-50-years-on-all-you-need-to-know-about-chinas-political-convulsion)

## 4.4 Post-socialist Era (1979- 2012), Economy in Command

### 4.4.1 Key Events

On the 18th August 1980, Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, gave a speech titled *On the Reform of the Party and State Leadership System (Dǎng hé guójiā lǐngdǎo zhìdù gǎigé)* at an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee in Beijing, launching the political reforms in China. He called for the end of bureaucracy and centralisation of power, proposing the “democratic centralism” as well as the “collective leadership”. Since then, China has implemented policies and reforms to become an exemplar of neoliberalism in the global economy (Harvey, 2011). China has embarked on a path of transition from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy. In the post-socialist era, the Chinese government started a series of economic and political reforms that lead to less governmental control of business and landownership, such as, instituting agricultural reforms, urban commercialisation, and a general atmosphere of openness in policy formulation. Deng Xiaoping's reforms attempted to establish more liberalised structures to support national development and prosperity. Deng tried to restore China's position as a global force through economic reforms that favoured a more liberal way of life. Societal values were seen as having turned from extreme collectivism to individualism, among which, femininity returned in the post-socialist era where women showing femininity and sexuality were not forbidden or condemned (Honig and Hershtatter, 1988). This historical era is generally named post-socialist or post-Mao by historians.

A new household responsibility system replaced a collective system, and the privatisation of state enterprises lead to China's economic growth. Due to the unjustified privatisation rules, men became the main owners of the production means (Deng and Shen, 2019; Liu, 2020). Later, Deng repeatedly called for the revival of political reforms, as further economic reforms were hindered by the original political system. In his speech titled *Advance Along the Road of Socialism with Chinese characteristics (Yánzhe yǒu zhòng guó tèsè de shèhuì zhǔyì dàolù qiánjìn)*, Zhao Ziyang, the new General Secretary of CCP, argued that socialism in China was still in its primary stage and by taking Deng's speech in 1980 as guidelines, Zhao outlined a variety of steps to be taken for the political reforms, including promoting the rule of law and the separation of powers, imposing de-centralisation, and improving the election system. This re-direction of values involved encouraging people to pursue personal wealth, a far cry from the previous exhortations to devote individual energies to the development of the country.

Before the reforms in the socialist era, every aspect of personal life, including work, marriage, personal relationships, and family was supposed to serve the greater national good. Women faced the danger of being marginalised (Rosenthal, 1998).

After Deng retired, power passed to the third-generation leadership led by Jiang Zemin. Jiang's macroeconomic reforms furthered Deng's vision for "Socialism with Chinese characteristics". Economic growth achieved a sustained high rate by the mid-1990s. In 1990, China's biggest special economic zone launched in the suburbs of Shanghai at Pudong, was designed to be China's new financial and commercial hub. Jiang laid heavy emphasis on scientific and technological advancement in areas such as space exploration. At the same time, Jiang's reign saw a continued rise in social corruption in all areas of life. Unemployment skyrocketed as unprofitable State-owned enterprises (SOE) were closed to make way for more competitive ventures internally and abroad (Meisner, 1999). Women workers were laid off at a disproportionate rate to that of the men and the ill-equipped social welfare system was put to a serious test, "women suffer inferior status compared with men in almost all spheres of life in the contemporary society (Li, 2013, p.34)". However, with the step-by-step dismantling of China's system of centrally planned socialism and other reforms, growth rates have accelerated, producing rising living standards, reduced poverty, and rapid increases in the skyscrapers, highways, and other symbols of a modern society.

At the same time, Premier Zhu Rongji's economic policies held China's economy strong during the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. Economic growth averaged at 8% annually. Living conditions improved significantly, although a wide urban-rural wealth gap was created as China saw the reappearance of the middle class (Sicular, Yang, and Gustafsson, 2021). In 2001, China was admitted to the World Trade Organization and won the bid for the 2008 Olympics. The economy continued to grow in double-digit numbers as the development of rural areas became the major focus of government policy. In 2010, China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy. Women seemed to be the darlings of the new era, enjoying the fruit of economic bloom. However, the status of women has deteriorated (Li, 2013; Walker and Millar, 2020) in terms of their work opportunities, income distribution, participation in politics, and social and domestic status, which will be discussed further in Chapter 8, the post-socialist era.

#### 4.4.2 *Social Cultural Background and the Mainstream Ideology*

As China began to transform itself from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy in the late 1970s, the country opened its doors to investors from all over the world. Not only did foreign commodities and capital enter the Chinese market but Western lifestyles and values challenged the communist ideology, such as class struggle and collectivism that had been dominating China for 30 years. Since the series of further reforms and opening up in the 1980s, Chinese society has undergone tremendous changes in terms of its economic system and socio-cultural ideologies in the process of promoting a so-called socialist market economy. Deng rejected Mao's egalitarianism as "everyone eating from the same big pot", an approach he saw as destroying incentives. Instead, he argued, "it is good to allow some people to get rich first," as this would stimulate others to try to do so as well. Much of the reform effort focused on fostering competition and providing rewards (to organizations and localities as well as individuals) to stimulate productivity and economic growth (Judd, 2002; Jia and Dong, 2013).

As Wang (2006, p. 234) indicated, "reforms in technological and economic domains unexpectedly shifted the existing social order and impinged on people's ways of thinking. A number of recent studies on students' job selection criteria have provided indicators of value changes on college campuses in China, consistently showing the prevalence of an awakened individualism, manifested as an emphasis on individual happiness, heightened self-awareness and a stronger sense of independence along with an overwhelming concern for individual well-being and a certain negligence of other people's interests. These studies have also consistently shown that accompanying this expanded individualism, there exists a fast-growing materialism, functionalism, utilitarianism and consumerism". Entrepreneurial impulses unleashed by decentralisation and commercialisation raise hopes for greater individualism, although social stratification remains deeply rooted in the Chinese way of life (Meisner, 1999).

As for the reasons of these well received changes in societal values, I argue, they may be due to the following two aspects: (1) a retaliation against the long-term oppression of individual interests in the socialist era and (2) the dissemination of Western values and lifestyle in the post-socialist era. At the core of this new ideology change was a commitment of the CCP to implement whatever policies and institutional changes were necessary to stimulate productivity and economic growth in a labour-intensive, export-promoting, market-driven development process, even if by doing so inequalities increased.

Among the most dramatic cultural changes that occurred as a consequence of Chinese economy reform policies was the transformation of women's role in society. Considering that gender knowledge is produced in various social settings and is embedded in an ideological framework that supports existing power relationships between the two genders and the state as discussed in Chapter 2, Chinese women's identity in the post-socialist era must be reconstructed under the complex interaction and negotiation of multiple forces. Ideologies such as the legacy of the Marxist perspective on women, the revived new-Confucianism of gender labour division, and Western feminist thoughts of self-awareness and social gender perspective are all contested against each other in the reconstruction process.

With the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, a series of national policies and regulations protecting women have gradually been hollowed out. In the 1980s, there was a trend of "returning" to be women in society. According to Barlow, as a rejection of the long-term leftist state hegemony, Chinese women have started to be in favour of the traditional ideology that stresses gender differences (Barlow, 1994). This was not the result from the awakening of women's self-awareness, subjective consciousness, or group consciousness, but out of resistance to the "Cultural Revolution" that obliterated female gender (Yang, 2004). However, another major reason that "women returning home" was soaring was that a large number of female workers were laid off due to the unfair and unprotected employment market, and it was difficult for women, including female university students, to find employment. Women who had lost their place in the public sphere were at a loss (Meng, 2012; Walker and Millar, 2020).

In the 1990s, with the decline of nationalism ideology, there were signs that the patriarchal ideology was sprawling. The completion of the market economy transformation does not bring a change in the destiny of women. Voices of "*fūnǚ huí jiā, go back home, women*" and "*jiēduàn xìng jiùyè, Staged employment for women*" that occurred in the public discourses of the CCP rose even higher. Traditional rules of "Nánzūnnǚbēi, men as superior and women as inferior", "nán qiáng nǚ ruò, strong men and weak women", "nan zhu nǚ cong, men dominate and women subordinate" were intensified consciously or subconsciously in printed media discourses as "right" and "natural" so that women were encouraged to go back to their traditional roles (Du and Wang, 2003).

Women were reduced to objects of pleasure for men. Commodified images of women in the discourses of consumerism all came to the surface of various media and call for attention. The male-oriented entertainment culture in the consumer society puts men and women in the mode of seeing and being seen under the male gaze theory (Mulvey, 1975), and women have remained objectified and become the aesthetic objects of appreciation viewed by men. Figure 4.7 shows women shopping in a mall. The female images presented in the mass media are often sexualised, materialised, and commercialised. The family planning of the One Child Policy was implemented in 1978, and patriarchal preference of son over daughter re-emerged. Women's independent personality, self-awareness and creativity were obliterated. Appearance anxiety among women increased to a high level previously unseen in Chinese history.

The women's movement in the post-socialist era is characterised by the "rise of women's consciousness about themselves as women, the formation of women's organizations, and the creation of new forms of activism to protect women's rights and interest and to embark on a new discourse on women" (Chow, Zhang and Wang, 2004, p. 164). Generally speaking, since 1978, in association with the rise of the Chinese economy, urban women's living conditions and social environment has improved. However, as discussed above, with a more diversified economy and a more liberal political, social and intellectual climate, the old and new problems confronted by women in light of the economic reforms appeared. Women workers lost their important social status in the socialist era, and faced the danger of being marginalised. In response to these issues, women's institutions, society, women's federation within the government, and scholars put on a react against this social inequality, although the scope and nature is totally different from the previous three eras in respect of the following points. (According to the author of this thesis, it cannot be called fight or struggle, hence the "react" is used here, although other scholars categorise it as a movement. Further discussion will be argued in Chapter 8.) Firstly, in the post-socialist era, women's defiance to the social inequality and its related research work was initiated and strongly advocated by women themselves, whereas in the previous three eras were promoted by male political leaders and intellectuals, and by the state consecutively.

Secondly, as pointed out by Wodak, in between ways of being in the world as women of certain types of identity and the dominant discourses of male-based public institutions, there are "multiple contextual factors and their interdependency, multiple positioning and the multiple identities women and men perform and live" (Wodak, 2008, p. 195). Discussions and

researches of women's studies from the post-socialist era have resulted more from efforts by women from below than by the CCP or state from above, with an emphasis on women's own identity and interests as a social group (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004). In the beginning, informed by a Marxist perspective on women and adopted by the CCP, the central concerns of women's condition and status were topics such as how women can improve their working competence; how women can succeed in their careers, and how women can contribute as half the sky, all of which reflect the integration of women's problems and their liberation within the national development framework. Decades later, especially since 1995, tension has been created between the official Marxist ideology of gender and emerging indigenous women's studies of both theory and practice in China (Dai, 2008).

Thirdly, women's studies as an academic discipline has been established in the post-socialist era and this challenges traditional knowledge about women (Chow, Zhang, and Wang, 2004). With increasing communication opportunities in the context of globalisation, the Women's Movement (react) in the post-socialist era beginning in the late 1980s has greatly inspired the discipline of women's studies in China. The Western Movement encouraged Chinese women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicised, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. The word "feminism" was firstly used in the article *A Prelude to Selection of America's Women Writers* by Zhu Hong in the journal *World Literature* in 1981 (Yan, 2011). Despite that the start of women's studies in China was decades later than that in the West. Chinese women and scholars of women's studies in China have not only learned the above-mentioned Western feminist theories and practices, but have also started to reflect on Chinese women's own life experiences (Song and Gao, 2021).

Today, it is claimed that the official guiding theory in the field of women's studies in China is the *Marxist Perspectives on Women* Mǎkèsī zhǔyì fùnǚ guān (Li and Zhang, 1994; Song, 2012). The introduction of Western women's studies theories has created tension with the official Marxist line in balancing theories imported from the West with indigenous thinking and practice in China (Zhang, 2022). The government stipulation that women's studies in China must be guided by *Marxist perspectives on women*, (but how to be guided is not explained), only emphasises the political correctness in line with the mainstream ideology (Dai, 2008). A new perspective to break up this impasse has the utmost urgency in the field of women's studies in China.

#### *4.4.3 Media Landscape and the Position of Women*

Since the 1980s, mass media in China has gradually moved from the idea to serve the Party in the socialist era to serve the people (Akhavan-Majid, 2004). At the same time, the structure and constitution of mass media has also undergone tremendous changes. Various types of newspapers and magazines with rapidly growing circulation, and the number of new radio and television stations are shooting up vigorously. The number of audiences has also risen sharply. Internet has gradually developed into one of the newest industries with the most influential and greatest market potential. These changes are all attempts to liberate the mass media from the extreme left ideology, playing its role as a platform for obtaining social public information and exchanging opinions from all parts of society, making it truly the mouthpiece of society. In the mid to late 1980s, in-depth reporting began to rise and flourish. Almost all mass media were committed to the pursuit of large-capacity, high-depth, and fast-paced content. In-depth reporting focused on hot issues in daily life, combining facts with in-depth commentary. In-depth reporting intends to reveal the inside truth of the social events in an all-round way.

In addition to the serious broadsheets, metropolis daily types of tabloids in most cities and towns began to rise in the 1990s with the aim of providing useful information for daily life, their readers being mainly urban residents. The content of the Metropolis Daily comprises mainly local news reports, emphasising practical information closely related to the lives of city residents. The reports from newspapers and periodicals have changed from production reports to consumer reports, and the targeted readers have changed from government agencies and production institutions to individuals. The management and operation of the media started to turn from state controlled to market-oriented. Market economy plays a pivotal role in the media which disseminates consumption concepts, stimulates purchase and production, and guides consumer behaviour. At the same time, media itself has become a daily consumer product, and people gradually regard the consumption as exploration and creation, a breakthrough point for one's own individuality and self-identity (Judd, 2002). The transition of media not only dispelled the traditional political ideology that conflicted with modern society, but also injected vigour back into that society. The media's foci on reporting people's mundane lives reflected the prevailing response to the people's desire to step out of the collective ideology and find personal value. Yin argued that the phenomenon of the Chinese newspaper industry since the 1990s was the production of globalised consumption desire (Yin, 2010). However, the transition of media has side effects to the society as well, for instance, blind worship of

consumerism and indifference to spiritual pursuits; individuals only pay attention to personal value, and a weak sense of social responsibility is breeding and so forth.

In this society, women's social status in the post-socialist era has declined, and discrimination against women risen (Rosenthal, 1998; Song, 2013b; Zuo, 2013). As Yang argues, some persistent oppression and discrimination against women, though mostly implicit, is legitimised through the intensification of traditional ethics in the post-socialist discourses, and many women are at a loss about their gender identity and about what women's liberation means for them in terms of feminist perspective (Yang, 2004). Furthermore, in the transition process from planned economy to market economy, left-behind women in rural areas, female migrant workers, and female off-employment workers became the so-called disadvantaged groups and discarded the class ideology. Helping vulnerable women under the name of 'protecting women's rights' without questioning the structural problems in the marketisation itself nor the capitalism system will not solve the discrimination faced by women. Gender equality promoted by the CCP is not the answer for the structural and systematic disadvantage women suffered. Song (2013b, p.101) argues that the unfair distribution of properties and cultural devaluation of women exacerbated women's unjustified laid off. Figure 4.8 shows the girl workers in a factory. When older, they will be laid-off as there are younger girls to replace them. More in-depth discussion on women's deteriorating situation in the post-socialist era is provided in Chapter 8.

In the academic domain, despite "feminism nǚquán zhǔyì" becoming one of the most contentious topics in contemporary social recognition, it still remains in a marginal non-mainstream position in the Chinese academy as a whole (Wang, 2017). According to Wang Zheng (1999, p.1),

"*Feminism* has long been a negative term in the People's Republic of China. In the Communist Party literature, the word *feminism* is always accompanied by the adjective *bourgeois* and often by the qualifier *Western*. Not only has exclusion of feminism from the official discourse erased a history of Chinese feminism from the public mind, it has also been integral to the claim that the CCP is the liberator of Chinese women."

CCP considers feminism as a form of political movement, which will not be allowed to exist. Only the political movements in charge of and in control of the CCP can exist. As a result,

there was a misunderstanding of feminism, such as regarding it as merely sex liberation; rivalling with men; a denial of men's roles; a complete ignorance of what feminism is, or even condemnation by the public. Chen (2013) mentioned that some people consider feminism is “nothing to do and looking for trouble méishì zhǎoshì”. In addition, Dong Limin (2013) claimed that such criticism of feminism takes the political energy out of the Chinese Women's Movement. Market economy elicited individualism and liberalism, and without government supervision, women's rights are damaged by the neoliberal capitalism under the existing institutional framework. Women's policy in China in the post-socialist era is lack of retrospection and reflection on consumerism and the market mechanism itself (Song, 2013b).

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) was held in Beijing. The Conference introduced different gender theories and ideas to China and demonstrated practices of Western feminist movements and achievements of gender equality in various countries. As a result, unprecedented wide attention was aroused in Chinese society, especially within the academy and among intellectual women, to reflect on and discuss women's issues. In addition to providing a huge impetus to the ongoing, however downturned, Women's Liberation Movement in the post-socialist era, there were other significant outcomes of the 1995 Conference on developing women's research and studies in China. The discipline of women's studies includes, firstly, the concept of social gender as a new perspective for the analysis of women's issues that was officially introduced and has gradually been accepted by scholars in related fields (Dong, 2013). Secondly, as Western feminism greatly influenced China's effort in its incorporation into the transnational women's movement, women's studies in China starts to show an interdisciplinary and pluralistic trend as researchers of women's studies try to extend their exploration to every aspect of human science and social science.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, which brought together diverse researches and theories in the discipline of women's studies, the powerful influence of Western thoughts and Western activities in respect of women and gender, exerted a massive pressure on China's own perspective on women. As these theories originated in the West, China had to deal with the borrowed concept and culture in the context of its own value system and unique historical background. Western ideas on gender are reformulated, rearticulated and re-contextualised in Chinese terms. Hence another question raised in the field in contemporary China focuses on the indigenous or innovative perspective of its theories and practices. In the Chinese context, the specific circumstances of a transformational post-socialist era of reflection

on socialist gender ideology of the socialist era, returning to traditional ethics of women's roles in the pre-socialist era, and embracing a social gender perspective of Western feminist thoughts must be taken into consideration.

Having discussed all four historical eras of the Women's Liberation Movement in China, it can be concluded that, on the one hand, in a unique historical context of national revolution and development, Chinese women were in a way passively "granted" equal rights to men through state legislation and system, which leads to a relatively weaker self-awareness or feminist consciousness of women as a social group. Consequently, their perception of and reaction to the construction of women's identity in media discourses are affected. On the other hand, social gender theory is the main discourse in China, which to some extent is consistent with the problems and confusion of Chinese urban educated women in contemporary Chinese cities, however it ignores the rights of marginalised rural women (Dai, 2018).



Figure 4.7 Women in the Post-socialist era

Source: [mil.news.sina.com.cn/2019-05-07/doc-ihvhiqax7121403.shtml](http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/2019-05-07/doc-ihvhiqax7121403.shtml)



Figure 4.8 Girl Workers in the Post-socialist era

Source: [kknews.cc/zh-cn/society/n3pva18.html](http://kknews.cc/zh-cn/society/n3pva18.html)

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Having explicated the contextual background in this chapter, Chapters 5 to 8 analyse the four historical eras respectively, explore public roles and domestic roles of women depicted in *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*, using the CL and CDA combined approach.

## Chapter 5 Late Qing Era (1872 - 1911) Incompetent and Decadent Women

As discussed in the contextual background of this thesis, the Opium Wars shattered the Chinese people's dream of being the "Celestial Empire, 天朝上国". Responding to a series of defeats and the foreseeable topple of the Qing era, Chinese reformers in the Qing court made great efforts (see Chapter 4) trying to establish a modern and strong nation. Era 1 in this study, the late Qing era (1872-1911), is a time period that has received far less attention from gender historians than the twentieth century. Women's public roles and their public space began to emerge in the late Qing era as there were no precedents provided in earlier societies, in which Chinese people's behaviour and social relationships were dominated by the Confucian philosophical system. Consequently, women's public roles and codes of conduct for behaviour in the public sphere warrant exploration. Barlow (2004) reveals that different linguistic categories concerning women and their issues reflect the complexity of how women are portrayed. Furthermore, what it means to be a woman in Chinese contexts is associated with the way of thinking and the processes of gendering. The construction of women's roles or how women are defined in the Qing era also conveys understandings of the power structures, social and political ideologies, and gender relations. Consequently, this process of shaping and redefining "women" during this era is an important nexus that intervenes into the dynamic dialogues between traditional and modern, China and the West, Chinese nationalist discourse and feminist discourse. Hence, as well as the age of globalization, the late Qing era can also be described as an age of localization, in which the literati and the rulers of the Qing court applied western thoughts and ideas in the Chinese context.

In this chapter, the online corpus linguistic tool, Sketch Engine, is employed to analyse the data of corpus 1 from the late Qing era. Covering from 1872 to 1911, this chapter intends to answer how women are represented in *Shen Bao*, and further, how dominant ideologies are imbued in *Shen Bao*. In addition, women's public and domestic roles are examined to analyse the power structures. There are five sections in this chapter. The first and second sections present the empirical data and outline the results generated by the Sketch Engine analysis tool. The first

section, **Word Sketch Analysis: The Discourse of “Gender Blame”**, examines the corpus 1 data as a whole. Using the *word sketch* function of the software, it provides a general picture by looking at the most common patterns of women’s representation, in particular, by examining the words *women* and *female gender*. Because Sketch Engine can distinguish grammatical functions, it is possible to use this tool to answer questions such as: “What sort of actions are women commonly represented as having done to them, and what sort of actions are they represented as doing?”, and “What is this corpus about?”. Comparative analysis of word sketch results between *women* and *female gender* will be conducted to reveal the differences in discourse reconstruction toward *women* and *female gender* (Baker and McEnery, 2013).

The second section, **Educate Women to Save Nation**, focuses on the high-frequency words and keywords generated by the software, identifying words that are statistically more frequent in one data set when compared against another. By conducting an analysis of the most frequent content words (nouns, verbs and adjectives) in the corpus, particular semantic groups that are frequently addressed in the data can be identified. Such words can then be grouped together and examined in more detail to reveal unique discourse strategies.

The third section, **De-Gendering of Women’s Image**, examines the set of high-frequency words and keywords detailed in section two, and identifies women’s public images and roles that were represented in *Shen Bao*. Then the fourth section, **The Ideal Wife**, examines the set of high-frequency words and keywords detailed in section two related to domestic role, and identifies women’s domestic images and roles represented in *Shen Bao*. Section three and four present a number of key features and issues relevant to the exploration of the correlation between women’s representations and the underlying ideology. The fifth section, **Conclusion**, summarises the main findings in relation to women’s representations in *Shen Bao* in the late Qing era, and raises further questions to be discussed later in Chapter 9.

### **5.1 Word Sketch Analysis: The Discourse of “Gender Blame”**

As illustrated in Table 3.1 on page 45, corpus 1 which is the late Qing era, consists of 540 articles and 471505 characters, generated and collected using the two sets of search terms “women 妇女” and “female gender 女子” (see Chapter 3).

Compared with other historical eras, surprisingly, the late Qing era generated the most articles. As discussed in Chapter 4, late Qing China is a backward, weak, and unenlightened society that is dominated by Confucianism. One might assume that “docile and domestic” women of this time are not given much attention in a mainstream national newspaper like *Shen Bao*. However, the data in this study illustrated by Table 3.1 reveals that women receive significant attention in *Shen Bao*. This conforms with other scholars’ research findings that women have been granted considerable attention in China’s modern history (Barlow, 1994, 2004; Hershatter and Zheng 2008; Rofel, 1999).

Figure 5.1 provides information about which year the 540 articles in corpus 1 are from. There is a conspicuous rise in the number of articles in this era, reaching a peak toward the end of the late Qing era. During turbulent times in this era, such as wars and reforms, public attention was directed away from “women problems”, and the number of articles generated in these years declined. Examples of turbulent times in the late Qing era include the Sino-French War (1883-1885), the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and the Hundred Day Reform (1898).

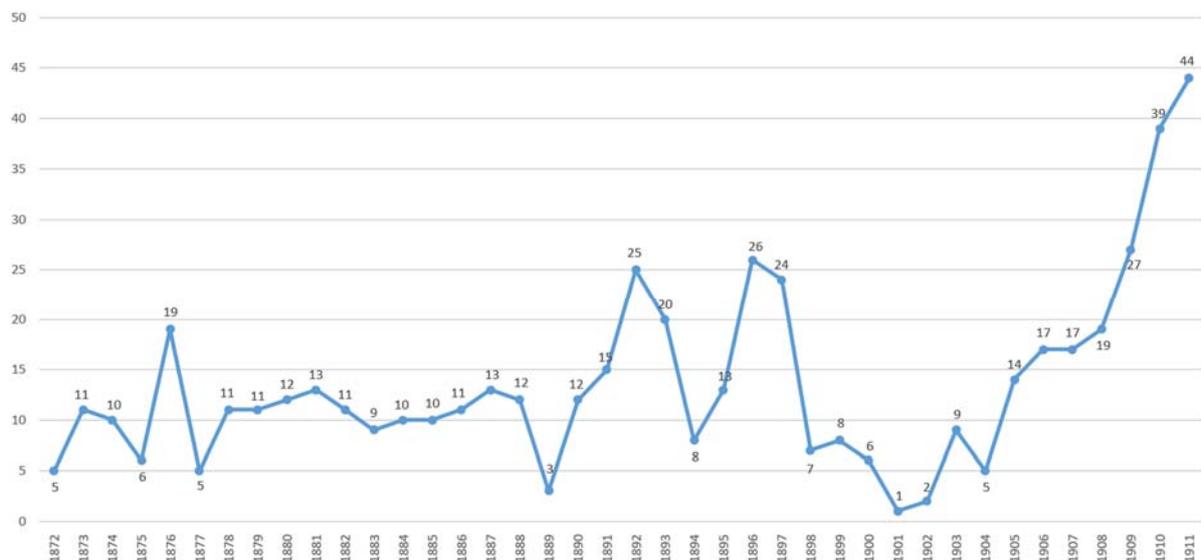


Figure 5.1 Number of Articles in Corpus 1

The general research question of this study is “How are women and female gender represented in *Shen Bao*?” So, how *women* and *female gender* are characterised in corpus 1, and the contexts within which *women* and *female gender* are presented is examined first. The Word Sketch function provides a plethora of grammatical and collocational information on the search

terms. The most frequent nouns, verbs and adjectives in corpus 1 are collectively considered, and similar types of words are grouped together both according to grammar and meaning to show what kinds of themes emerge.

### 5.1.1 *Word Sketch of “Women”*

Classical Chinese, also known as Old Chinese (see Chapter 3) is still in use in the late Qing era, where the word *women*, *Fùnǚ* 婦女, comprises two words: *fù* 妇 means married women, and *nǚ* 女 means young women not married yet. Figure 5.2 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of *women* in corpus 1. As afore discussed, Classical Chinese, the written form of old Chinese language, is still in use during the late Qing era. The linguistic nature of Classical Chinese text (see Chapter 3) makes the process of data analysis more challenging. For the Republican, socialist, and post-socialist eras, Sketch Engine gives satisfying and reliable results. However, for corpus 1, the late Qing era, for the purpose of word sketch analysis, it makes mistakes, and there are two reasons for this. Firstly, this reflects the true characteristics of the Classical Chinese text which was discussed in Chapter 3. Secondly, the author of this thesis hypothesised that Sketch Engine may have had difficulty in analysing Classical Chinese text grammatically. The author of this thesis emailed the Sketch Engine technical team about this question and received the following reply on 21.01.2021:

The word sketches are created based on the word sketch grammar, i.e. a series of rules written in the CQL query language that search for collocations in a text corpus and categorize them according to their grammatical relations. It is very likely that the grammar was made for traditional Chinese (\*) and wasn't modified for Old Chinese (Classical Chinese) in any way, which might cause problems that you described.

(\*) The difference between traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese is also explained in Chapter 3.

Hence, applying Sketch Engine to raw Classical Chinese text is an area yet to be explored. Sketch Engine supports coding grammar rules manually. The solution for this could be writing new grammar rules for using Sketch Engine to analyse Classical Chinese text. However, for the purpose of this study, a modification was made to better adapt to the nature of Classical Chinese text in the late Qing era. The full literal (gloss) translation is provided immediately under the print screen of the word sketch, and repetition will be included in the translation.

Where mistakes occur, I move the collocates to the correct column in the translation. Both the original table cell where the mistake occurs and the new moved table cell are marked with \*. In cases of functional words or symbols that do not make sense, I will mark them with \* as well, and delete them.

Back to Figure 5.2, it can be seen that Sketch Engine has grouped the collocates of *women* into six main grammatical patterns, or frames. Table 5.2 provides a translation of the word sketch of *women*. The first frame of Table 5.2 shows words that occur in the frame {Women and/or x}. Additionally, this frame includes cases where *women* appears at the end {x and/or Women}. This pattern is useful in identifying other groups or people who tend to get associated with *women*. Here, in the first column, the only group is children (小孩). It should be mentioned that it is only in corpus 1 (late Qing Era), that the word *women* is not listed together with men in the frame {Women and/or x}. In keeping with Confucianism's way of governing, social harmony results in part from one knowing one's place in the societal order and playing one's part well. This idea can be seen in Confucius's dictum "There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son. (Legge 1930, p. 165)". Consequently, everyone has a different social status in the hierarchy; the superior-subordinate relationship with other people is insurmountable, and particular duties arise from one's particular situation in relation to others. Prior to the late Qing era, in the context of the strict age and gender-based hierarchical relationships of the Confucian social order, Confucianism promotes the idea of gender inequality and the patriarchal hegemony. Women were not viewed as the equal opposite gender of men. Women were placed together with children at the bottom of this governing hierarchy. The corpus 1 data from the late Qing era re-enacts this unchangeable social order.

and/or	Subject_of	Object_of	Indirect-Object_of	N_Modifier	Possession
小孩 婦女 以及 小孩	入 婦女 入	使 使 婦女	使 使 婦女	良家 良家 婦女	墮落者 名 而 良家 婦女 之 墮落者 無 可 勝數 或
	與* 婦女 與 男子	禁止 禁止 婦女	令 令 婦女	日本 日本 婦女	心 婦 人心 非 婦女 之 心 皆 毒 也
	出 婦女 出	禁 禁 婦女	知 知 何 怪 上海 之 婦女	調戲* 期 調戲 婦女	
	主持 婦女 主持	善於 善於 引誘 良家 婦女		▲* 婦女	
	充當 婦女 充當	良家* 之 名 而 良家 婦女 之 墮落者 無 可		家中 家中 婦女	
	逮 婦女 本 可 不 逮	令 令 婦女		泰西 泰西 婦女	
	病 而 功 倍 農家 婦女 亦 病 夏 畦 是 宜 爾 也	携 携 婦女		家 家 婦女	
	纏足 婦女 纏足	中國* 中國 婦女		引誘良家 引誘 良家 婦女	
	讀書識字 婦女 不 皆 能 讀書 識			農家 力 勞 而 功 倍 農家 婦女 亦 病 夏 畦	
	出門 婦女 出門			人家 人家 婦女	
	尤甚* 婦女 尤甚			省 省 婦女	
	裹足 婦女 裹足			地方 地方 婦女	

Figure 5.2 Word Sketch of “Women”

Table 5.1 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Women”

<b>And/or</b>	<b>Subject of</b>	<b>Object of</b>	<b>Indirect-object of</b>	<b>N-modifier</b>	<b>Possession</b>
children	go in	make	make	good	reprobate
	*	forbid	command	Japanese	mind
	go out	prohibit	know	*	
	manage	good at seducing		*	
	act as	*		domestic	
	shortcoming	ask		Western	
	ill	take		domestic	
	bound feet	*		*	
	educate	molest*		rural	
	go out			good family	
	*			province	
	seduce			place	
		Chinese*			

In Figure 5.2 and Table 5.2, in the second column, the second column {Women + [verb]}, women is the subject (or doer) of the verb. The third and the fourth columns identify the opposite pattern, cases when women is the object (direct and indirect object) of the verb – or, rather, when women are the receiver of the action. Examples of verbs identified here include: {women + [go in, and out (of the domestic domain), manage (household chores), (of the domestic domain), act as, bound feet, receive education]}, and {[make, forbid, seduce, molest] + women (do or doing something)}. The first column discussed above shows that women are

not treated equally to men. The second column shows that women were treated as subordinates in society.

Regarding “與 *yu*”, the second row in the second column in Figure 5.2 {Women + [verb]}, I was first considering categorizing this collocate to the first column {Women and/or *x*}. However, after checking the concordances, it is semantically correct in the second column. Examples to support this approach include: “凡宴客必有婦女坐次與男子相間 (In the western countries,) women are sitting next to men in the banquets.”, and “其婦女習業亦與男子等 (In the western countries,) women are practising the same (occupations practised by men)”. In these instances, “與 *yu*” is a function word and should not be categorized in either of the columns.

The fifth column in Table 5.1 is where women is modified by a noun modifier {[N-modifier] + Women}. These modifiers mainly indicate status / class / location, for example, {[good (domestic)] + women} and {[Western] + women}. The merits of being “good domestic women” are still emphasized (which is discussed later in detail in the fourth section, The Ideal Wife). Other collocates, like Japanese and Western, reflect the process of globalization bringing in modern ideas from other countries. The idea of equal rights for women is originated from the West, and it is widely accepted that the idea of equal rights was first introduced and promoted during the women’s emancipation movement in the late Qing era.

The sixth column in Table 5.1 is when women is used in the possessive form, {women’s + [noun]}. Collocates in this column can be seen as issues that are related to women. When a group of collocates of a particular word all have a similar meaning or function, then this can be called a semantic preference of that word (Stubbs, 2001). For example, most words from columns three and four, such as {[make, forbid, prohibit, command] + women}, and so forth, indicate that women need to be guided and that women’s rights need to be given by men. It is sometimes possible to take this kind of analysis a step further, particularly when a set of related collocates, examined in context, seems to suggest a particularly passive stance and thus reveals a discourse (or way of representing an aspect of the world). For example, in Table 5.2 below, the collocates {[seduce] + women} and {[molest] + women} suggest that the word *women* carries a negative discourse prosody (Stubbs, 2001) that is related to being the object to criminate. It is also worth mentioning that a single word may have multiple semantic

preferences and discourse prosodies, particularly in cases when people tend to disagree over how a concept should be represented.

Table 5.2 Categories of Collocates for the Word “Women” can be called a semantic preference of that word (Stubbs, 2001). For example, most words from columns three and four, such as {[make, forbid, prohibit, command] + women}, and so forth, indicate that women need to be guided and that women’s rights need to be given by men. It is sometimes possible to take this kind of analysis a step further, particularly when a set of related collocates, examined in context, seems to suggest a particularly passive stance and thus reveals a discourse (or way of representing an aspect of the world). For example, in Table 5.2 below, the collocates {[seduce] + women} and {[molest] + women } suggest that the word *women* carries a negative discourse prosody (Stubbs, 2001) that is related to being the object to criminate. It is also worth mentioning that a single word may have multiple semantic preferences and discourse prosodies, particularly in cases when people tend to disagree over how a concept should be represented.

Table 5.2 Categories of Collocates for the Word “Women”

Category	Collocates
types of women	West, Japanese, domestic, rural, good family, reprobate
crime	seduce, molest,
problem	going out, shortcoming, illness, footbound, education, mind

### 5.1.2 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

This part analyses the word sketch of *female gender* (nüzi 女子). 女性 *nü xing* is not a commonly used term in the late Qing era, so *nüzi* 女子 is used as the historical equivalent (see Chapter 3). Figure 5.3 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of *female gender* in corpus 1. Compared with the word sketch generated using the other search term *women*, for *female gender*, there are more descriptions of qualities, traits and appearance, such as {female gender’s + [no talent, quality etc]} or {[weak] + female gender}, and so forth. *Shen Bao* portrayed the weak physical condition of women through the phrase *looks weak* (wàibiǎo róuruò), implying that their physical condition rendered them unfit to contribute to the society. In examples such as “*the weak women (looking) elegant and delightful*” and “*weak and vulnerable women*”,

these expressions communicate the newspaper's assumptions of the feminine traits that the female gender is expected to possess.

In Table 5.3, the first column {female gender + [verb]}, *female gender* is the subject of the verb. Columns two and three are cases where *female gender* is the object (direct or indirect object) of the verb. The fourth column is the nouns that modify women {[N-modifier] + female gender}. This column mainly contains collocates that referred to the location of women (e.g., {[China, Japan, Shanghai, Vietnam, Western countries] + female gender}) and types of women (e.g., {[good family] + female gender}). The fifth column is where *female gender* is used as a noun modifier, {women + [noun]}, and the most frequent collocations are {female gender + [no talent, normal university, education etc]}). These modifiers reflect the key topic concerning women – women's education – which will be further discussed in section 3.

↔ ⋮ ○ ×	↔ ⋮ ○ ×	↔ ⋮ ○ ×	↔ ⋮ ○ ×	↔ ⋮ ○ ×
Subject_of	Object_of	N_Modifier	Modifies	Possession
出 ... 女子 不出	使 ... 使 女子	良家 ... 良家 女子	無才 ... 女子 無才 便是	心 ... 女子 之 心 以
受 ... 女子 受	掉* ... 李 掉 女子	人* ... 人 女子	師範學 ... 女子 師範學 堂	身 ... 同 為 婦 人 女 子 之 身 何 此 等
自立 ... 女子 不 知 自 立	國 ... 西 國 女 子 之 束 腰 此	中國 ... 中國 女 子	○* ... 誘 拐 女 子	能 ... 其 女 子 之 能
出嫁 ... 女子 出 嫁	將 ... 會 中 者 將 女 子	弱 ... 一 弱 女 子	教育 ... 女 子 教 育 之	
至* ... 女 子 至	見 ... 見 了 一 個 面 貌 長 得 好 些 的 女 子	婦人 ... 婦 人 女 子	中西 ... 女 子 中 西 醫 學 堂	
入 ... 女 子 入	令 ... 令 女 子	日本 ... 日 本 女 子 本 有 興 風 會	偵探團 ... 期 中 華 女 子 偵 探 團	
能 ... 女 子 不 能	謂 ... 之 語 說 者 謂 日 本 女 子	▲* ... 女 子	張三 ... 女 子 張 三	
得 ... 女 子 亦 得	至 ... 女 子 至	上海 ... 也 而 上 海 女 子	治內 ... 男 子 治 外 女 子 治 內	
為 ... 女 子 為	知 ... 知 女 子 之	越南 ... 越 南 女 子	身 ... 人 生 不 幸 作 女 子 身 又 不 幸 而	

Figure 5.3 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Table 5.3 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Subject of	Object of	N-modifier	Modifies	Possession
go out	make	good family	No talent	mind
receive	*	*	Normal college	body
autonomy	*	Chinese	*	ability
getting married	make	vulnerable	Education	
*	see	married	China-West	
can (not)	make	Japanese	detectives	
need	call	*	anonymous women	
be	*	Shanghai	stay home	
	know	Vietnam	body	
	abduct*	Western*		

Table 5.4 summarises some of the key points that emerged from these word sketches. As shown in the table, the word sketch of *female gender* revealed a number of characteristics that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. Compared to the word sketches of *women*, collocates of *female gender* relate directly to issues of women’s quality and personal affairs: {[vulnerable, good] + female gender} and {female gender + [no talent, getting married, autonomy]}. These representations of women in *Shen Bao* are characterized by an undermining attitude towards their competence through a highlight on their feminine body. Figure 5.4 compares the visualizations of the word sketches of *women* and *female gender*. This is the era in which there is not much difference between the word sketches of *female gender* and *women*, which is shown in Figure 5.4.



The first section of this chapter has shown that *women* and the *female gender* carry a passive prosody, and are frequently portrayed as weak, incapable, left-behind and prone to crimes or fraud. Traditional Confucian doctrines for women such as “A woman without talent is virtuous”, feet bounding, “never outside the house but stay at home all day” and other highly valued traditional merits of women before, now have been equated with national backwardness and shame. The following two examples illustrate the concordance of how *female gender* was portrayed in *Shen Bao*:

*Female gender is no good but harm, truly is the most useless thing in the universe, the abandoned goods in the country. (女學堂餘議, 1989.2.22)*

*(Female gender) plays with makeups and bound feet, make themselves lovely and pretty for men's pleasure. (創辦女子尚武會緒言, 1911.11.28)*

While this section has considered the larger patterns across the whole of corpus 1 using the data generated from the Word Sketch function, analysis that employed other important statistical tools in corpus linguistics follows in the next sections. In addition, section one **Word Sketch Analysis: The Discourse of “Gender Blame”**, and two **Educate Women to Save Nation** are corpus-based analysis, with the minimum subjective interpretation from the author of this thesis. Section three and four are Critical Discourse Analysis based on the data generated using the corpus approach, and examine women and female gender in the political-historical context. As discussed in Chapter 3, corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis methodologies were adopted to achieve an objective and holistic analysis of data.

## **5.2 High-Frequency Words and Keywords Analysis: Educate Women to Save Nation**

### *5.2.1 High-Frequency Words*

High-frequency words are expected to reflect the subject matter of the corpus articles. As afore discussed, Classical Chinese, the written form of old Chinese language, is still in use during the late Qing era. As afore discussed, the linguistic nature of Classical Chinese text (see Chapter 3) makes the process of data analysis more challenging. For the Republican, socialist, and post-socialist eras, Sketch Engine gives satisfying and reliable results. However, for corpus 1, the late Qing era, for the purpose of high-frequency word analysis, it gives a lot of meaningless function words rather than content words, and there are two reasons for this. The solution for this could be writing new grammar rules for using Sketch Engine to analyse Classical Chinese text. However, for the purpose of this study, a modification was made to better adapt to the

nature of Classical Chinese text in the late Qing era. To tackle this problem, this involved applying the additional filter word of “women 女” to generate the high-frequency words list, and generate results that were relevant and contextual. The other three historical eras do not have this problem since modern Chinese text is used. The filter word “women 女” used here to generate high-frequency words in corpus 1 eliminated the general lexical verbs (e.g., come, say, take), lexical markers of modality (e.g., think, want, need) and general adjectives (e.g., good, little, new), as well as function words. Figure 5.5 displays the screenshot of high-frequency words.

Table 5.6 shows the translation of the high-frequency words of corpus 1. Cells in Table 5.5 marked with \* are grammatically wrong collocations so they are excluded from the list. The majority of these high-frequency words are new phenomena, for example, women workers, women’s education, or women’s school. These high-frequency words in Table 5.5 show how things are changing for women. Women are no longer confined inside the house and are allowed to work and study outside the family walls.

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
1 女	1,793	11 女工	35	21 女校	20	31 女大	10	41 士女	8
2 女子	1,055	12 女口	34	22 教女	16	32 少女	10	42 夫婦女	8
3 婦女	463	13 婢女	29	23 母女	15	33 女名	9	43 談女	7
4 男女	223	14 幼女	29	24 妻女	15	34 與女	9	44 女為	7
5 女士	86	15 烈女	28	25 女犯	14	35 女家	9	45 兒女	7
6 妓女	71	16 女界	26	26 女流	13	36 女科	8	46 言婦女	6
7 子女	65	17 女學	26	27 女口	11	37 女無	8	47 女中	6
8 女孩	61	18 小女子	23	28 籍女	11	38 女服	8	48 美女	6
9 之女	46	19 生女	23	29 女人	11	39 使女	8	49 閨女	5
10 女者	37	20 女郎	22	30 為女	10	40 女兒	8	50 列女	5

Figure 5.5 Screenshot of High-Frequency Words

Table 5.5 Translation of the High-Frequency Words

nv	Women workers	Women's school	*	*
Female gender	*	Educate women	Teenage girls	*
Women	Maid	Mother-daughter	*	These women
Men and women	Baby girl	Wife-daughter	*	*
Madam	Heroic women	Women prisoner	Women's uterine family	Sons and daughters
Prostitute	Women world	Women (negative prosody)	Subjects for women's education	*
Children	Women's education	*	*	*
Girl	Little women	*	Women's clothing	Beautiful women
daughter	Give birth to a girl	women	Women servant	*
*	lady	*	daughter	Heroic women

### 5.2.2 Keywords

A keyword is a word that occurs more frequently in one corpus than another. Keyword analysis reveals the different contexts in which women are written about (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). However, the difference needs to be statistically significant, and it is relative to the overall size of the two corpora being compared. Generally, statistical tests can be used to determine which words have a significant difference in frequency between two corpora (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). With Sketch Engine, the default Chinese corpus for keyword purpose is the **Chinese Web Corpus (zhTenTen)** by Stanford University, which is made up of texts collected from the Internet. The corpus belongs to the TenTen corpus family which is a set of web corpora built using the same method and contains 10+ billion words. Figure 5.6 below shows the screen shot of the keywords list, comprising 50 words that were most statistically significant when using log-likelihood tests. Corpus linguists regularly

have to impose cut-off points in their data analysis. The author has therefore simply chosen to focus on a more manageable number – 50 keywords that are strongest in terms of statistical significance.

The method of categorising keywords is a fairly subjective process. Concordances are checked to analyse the context. When creating categorizations and assigning words to them, ideological issues are often raised. For example, women’s education, occurred 121 times in this corpus in different forms: 女学生, 女学校, 女学堂, 读书识字, 女学, 女科, and so forth. Figure 5.6 is the keyword list generated by the Sketch Engine, only the relevant words are selected: good (domestic) women, girl student, women’s education, good (domestic) female gender, read and write, women with no talent, women, parents, married female gender, vulnerable female gender, women’s school, women’s Normal schools, China West, good family female gender, learn to read and write, women with no talent, parents, married female gender, vulnerable female gender, women schools, faithfulness and loyalty, girls. This preliminary analysis of the top 50 high-frequency words suggests that many of the most frequent types in the corpus articles directly or indirectly refer to issues of women’s education. The high-frequency words and keywords generated in this corpus directly or indirectly involve women’s issues.



Figure 5.6 Screenshot of Keywords

The high-frequency words and keywords are now divided into two categories: social role related and family role related, which will be discussed respectively in the next two sections, which examine how these ideologies are perpetuated through the language of different semantic themes. High-frequency words and keywords were categorized into groups as shown in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Categories of High-Frequency Words and Keywords

<b>Category</b>	<b>Words</b>
Types of women	Baby girl, teenage girl, women, married women, lady, married women, women prisoner, beautiful women, heroic women
occupation	Servant, maid, prostitute, women workers, women's clothing
issues	Women's education, women's school
relationship	Men and women, wife and daughter, women's uterine family, mother and daughter
Description of women	Vulnerable women, good (domestic) women

### **5.3 Social Role Analysis: De-Gendering the Image of Women**

As discussed in Chapter 4, in the late Qing era the number of newspapers published rapidly increased. Heretofore, publications for women to read had been limited to women's domestic conduct codes, that were no more than restatements of traditional precepts which governed their restricted lifestyle within that isolation. However, the articles in newspapers began to address women as an integral part of society, giving them information about the world beyond women's quarters, promoting a feeling of group identification, and providing new alternatives to their previous physically and mentally confined lives that were dictated by traditional social customs. The representations of women that appeared in the newspapers at this time is a unique aspect of a new style of journalism, which by its very existence, was revolutionary.

Women's public roles and women's conduct codes in public are constructed in the late Qing era after most intense discussions and debates, to a degree that even women's behaviours, appearances and accoutrement in public are judged and scrutinized. The two-thousand-year time-honoured Confucian "inner" and "outer" rule forbids women from going outside the

domestic sphere, and women's roles were inside the family domain. Conduct codes for women's behaviour in public and women's public roles have not been provided by the Confucian doctrines. These newly constructed roles for women are not established overnight, but after a long process of experimentation and negotiation. In the following section, the high-frequency words and keywords relating to public role are selected, and placed in a social-historical context to examine the construction of women's public roles. Data description, explanation and analysis are provided. The findings are mainly in two areas. Firstly, discourse relating to women is closely intertwined with nationalism. Secondly, there is considerable tension in discourse relating to women between the opposing sides of the traditional intellectuals (the resistance in the Qing court) versus organic intellectuals (the reformers) as noted and categorised by Gramsci.

### 5.3.1 *Women and Nation: The De-Sexualised Promotion of Nationalism*

In the late Qing era, women's representations were united in ardent nationalism. The whole society was concerned with the fate of the Chinese nation. Many articles in *Shen Bao* stressed China's perilous condition in the modern world and the need for decisive action to save it from extinction. These kinds of articles strengthened the argument that the nation's fate was no longer strictly a male concern, and that women should demand their rights to be heard in the interests of China's preservation. Henceforth, women's rights were a cause that was indissolubly linked with, yet subordinate to and defined by, the interests of the nation. Examples include:

*Educate and treat women same as men, so that the nation will be wealthy and military will be strong.* (女學堂餘議, 1889.2.22)

*The weakness of China because of its contempt to Women.* (論男女宜有別, 1897.10.7)

*Women must be educated and cultivated in order to educate and cultivate citizens of constitutional state.* (創辦婦女日報意見書, 1911.5.24)

*Let women known the perilous condition our country and woken them up / arouse them with patriotism.* (創辦婦女日報意見書, 1911.5.24)

Women's newly elevated status produced exhortations to rearrange women's public roles, and to make women productive citizens in order to save the nation. Male reformers in the Qing court claimed that women were confined in the inner chambers and isolated from the outside world, which greatly hindered women from contributing to Chinese society. Liang Qichao (refer to Chapter 4) proposed that women should be released from the family walls and participate in the society as independent profit-makers (*shengli zhe*)(Liang, 1896). Other male reformers, like Jin Tianhe, called for women's attention to their public duty of patriotism and national salvation (Zhang, 2015).

With the deepening of the national crisis, women's roles were polarized into two extremes: the de-sexualised "mother of the nation" and the de-sexualised nation defender — "heroic women". The former was promoted out of the belief that compared with the weak, ignorant, backward women discussed in the first section of this chapter, physically strong mothers produce strong babies; literate mothers raise better children. "Mother of the nation" not only meant a stronger future generation for the nation eugenically, but also was the name used to re-define an ideal woman. For example: *Who to blame other than the mothers of the nation for the foundation of our civilization?* (愛國女學校重設文科招生啟, 1909.1.12). In this example, the emphasis is that women are the reason for China's problems. Blaming women for defeats or wrongs that are not women's fault is the phenomenon of "gender blame". The term "gender blame" is introduced and defined by the author of this thesis in Chapter 2. Other examples in *Shen Bao* of women represented as "mother of the nation" include:

*Education is the key to the nation's strength; the strength of education is determined by the citizens. Hence, the first step to enlightened / well educated citizens is to create the "Mothers of the Nation" ...Mothers accompany the children, taking care of them every day. The more affection of children towards their mother, the more influence their mothers have. As a result, well-educated mothers raise good children, contrarily, illiterate mothers raise arrogant and wilful children...We cannot emphasise enough that the various harm caused (by illiterate mothers) to their children...Who have such influence / power other than their mothers? How can we not educate women?* (論地方官宜注重女子教育, 1906.05.14)

*Women are the "Mothers of the Nation". Women must be equipped with the vista of the world. Nowadays our citizens are not enlightened / educated. Foreigners think that (our)*

*citizens only know to fight for domestic power and have no ambition for the outside world because of the servility. This should be mothers' duty to teach (their children).*

(世界女子協會職名章程，1911.3.3)

Another representation of women promoted in the late Qing era was “烈女 liè nǚ”. However, this word has different connotations. In Confucianism where women's virtue is regarded as a normative concept and subjective identity, women won praise for killing themselves to avoid rape or dishonour. As noted by Rey Chow (1986, p. 78), the Chinese liè nǚ tradition refers to the asymmetrical or sacrificial structure that “women characters are seen willingly to resist personal desires or to give up their own lives in the names of chastity and morality”, which “stresses obedience to unwritten as well as written laws regulating female behaviour.” Many articles each year in corpus 1 praise rigorously chaste women who died a grand death to keep their traditional and patriarchal traits. Officials and intellectuals drew connections between gendered virtue, elite status, and good government, and bestowed awards and literary encomia on virtuous chaste women (Hershatter and Zheng, 2008). In dying heroically, women embodied loyalty and faithfulness. For generations, men avidly wrote and promoted such stories. Men linked women's loyalty and faithfulness to men, to men's loyalty and faithfulness to the empire. These highly valued qualities of women being loyal and chaste to men became models of the loyalty that a virtuous man owed his ruler. Hence, in this sense, liè nǚ is translated as rigorously chaste women. The representation of the rigorously chaste women “‘imitate’ or ‘continue’ traditional patterns of oppression against women in the Chinese culture (Chow, 1986, p. 78)”, legitimize the patriarchal demand for women being loyal to men, and also men being loyal to their ruler.

However, since the death of Hui Xing (1870 - 1905), who suicided to promote women's education, liè nǚ represented a new meaning -- “heroic women” who die for the country, for the greater cause. Heroic women represented a new type of womanhood that appropriated both the features of traditional Chinese exemplary women and the characteristics of modern Western heroines. Hui Xing was compared with the French heroic woman, Madame Roland (1754 - 1793), a revolutionary, salonnière and writer. Heroic women were praised in the late Qing as highly as the most accomplished and most respected women in Chinese history and literature —talented women, wise mothers, and rigorously chaste women. Moreover, besides praising Hui Xing's devotion for the nation and her fellow countrymen like Madame Roland, her

morality of “getting rid of personal considerations and selfish desires 絕私情, 滅私慾” was also highlighted. More and more articles encourage women to die for the country. More examples such as:

*On paper, women are chivalrous; nationalism thoughts rise in their minds. (方芷小傳, 1911.12.15)*

*Treat death as light as a feather and die for the nation, Great women heroines! (松江女傑小傳, 1911.12.07)*

*Women heroines like Qin Liang boost the morale of the army. This is the Northern Expedition of the women’s legion. (讀詩一得, 1911.12.14)*

*(All great countries) have great heroic women (fighting) besides the men. (論女學宜注重德育來稿代論, 1906.4.29)*

With the growing concerns over women’s roles and status outside the family domain, the discussions on how women should work independently gradually emerged. However, it is in the Republican era (Chapter 6) that the thoughts are more mature. In the late Qing era, the reformers focused on women’s appearance and conduct codes of behaviour in public rather than how to protect women worker’s rights. For example:

*Those women who come to work with makeups, should be reprimanded and dismissed. Promotion should be based on the skills, not pretty looks...When before the start and after the end of the work day, more patrols are need. If there are any unemployed hooligan who dare to flirt / molest (women workers), should be arrested immediately and severely punished. (各廠女工宜善為處置說, 1900.4.13)*

“Mother of the nation” and “heroic women” are variations of traditional “good wife and mother”, “devote to husband and son” sugar coated with the modern nationalism. Women are still described as “obedient and dedicated”, however, this time not for men, but for the country.

### 5.3.2 Women and Education: The Tensions

In terms of public education, women’s representations went through the most dramatic turn. Prior to the late Qing era, the aim of traditional women’s education was limited to the teaching

of social ethics and family traditions with an emphasis on how to become a virtuous wife and good mother (Pan, 1996). In short, to educate women to be docile and obedient (see Chapter 4). The idea is that a virtuous woman was “a woman who has no talent”. Based on Liang Qichao’s *On Women’s Education* (Liang, 1876), women had been completely deprived the right to be educated in the Confucianism ruled societies. Resultantly this made women the objects of edifying, ruling and criticizing by men. It was in the late Qing that a campaign to establish women’s public schooling began in China. The idea was that, to be able to be this “ideal woman” that the reformers planned, women should be educated and enlightened in order to fulfil the obligation to the nation. Women’s public education bears the dreams of the reformers to become a modern and prosperous country. The goal of women’s education at the time was to improve women’s intelligence, traits, the physical strength and patriotism as well as to train revolutionaries and assassins (Xia, 2020). Women are fully included in the wave of national salvation. Well educated women shoulder the dream that China will have a place in the modern world. Modern education replaced the traditional women’s home virtue education is the prerequisite for the building of a new modern county.

However, *Shen Bao* has opposite opinions. Many articles were against adopting western ideas of promoting gender equality; and in favour of women staying at home. This is a reflection that the resistance and opposition against women’s rights is huge. For examples:

*Each time gender equality is discussed, all ganged up to obstruct. (毀家談 , 1908.2.18) .*

*It is such a shame that women in the boudoir come out to work measly for some petty money. Such disastrous behaviour annihilated moral and humiliated norms. (論婦女作工宜設善章, 1888.4.1)*

*There are many so called ‘civilized’ people and unruly students who exploit the names of ‘freedom and gender equality’ to incite ideas like, gender equality, freedom of marriage, women’s rights, and family revolution. In his mouth, he talks the talk. Birds of a feather, flock together. With such a group of people out and about, it is only natural for those shameless men and women to follow with no shame and grace, and no respects to norms and moral customs. Just fool around in the dark. (自由女, 1909.11.19)*

*Reformers' promotion of women's education is harmful to women, making women lost and deeply astray. (兴女学说, 1903.10.12)*

Reformers made the arguments in the following three aspects to reduce resistance and gain social recognition and support.

1) Quotations from the Confucianism literature and citations from the archaic Chinese philosophy of Yin-Yang (see Chapter 4). Obeyers of traditional etiquette claimed that:

*All talented women (women received education) in the world both in ancient and modern times chant the words of romance, flowers, snow and moon. These women are accustomed to lusty and obscene words, so that they lose their chastity and virginity. In a word, talented women are often stupid and will not end well. Hence, women better stay not educated. (书论女学后, 1876.4.7)*

*Men take world as their responsibility, and they should have wealth and knowledge. Therefore, men should study with no limitation. (中西女塾说, 1890.2.23)*

*Regarding women going out to receive education, first of all, women cannot learn much. Even if they do learn, they can only contribute to trivial things like what to eat and drink. Then, who will do washing, cleaning, cooking and other house work? If we let women receive education, are you suggesting men do the house work instead? (女学堂论, 1903.4.24)*

These articles believe that it is necessary to educate men, but not for women. Women's born duty is to do housework, and a woman's place is in the home. If women are allowed to go to school, tendency to deprave or corrupt social moral and decency will increase. No good can come out of it. Hence, women should stay uneducated. Other articles hold stubborn conservative beliefs that Chinese women's uneducated situation is becoming more harmful and shameful, and women should receive education. However, these articles demand the old "Four Virtues" of women's, i.e. "Female virtues (妇德)", "Female words (妇言)", "Female appearances (妇容)" and "Female work (妇功)". Obedience to their husbands and raising children were the most important sign of filial piety, for example, Liang's *On Women's Education* (Liang, 1896). Traditional norms like "men lead and women follow" are still a must for women. Reformers castigated and refuted these backward views, claiming that women's

education should not just be traditional women's home education in public. It should be that, Chinese traditional women's learning and moral requirements integrated with modern subjects and knowledge, as it is represented through both the subjects and the regulations (与人论创兴女学事, 1902.9.14), in order to fulfil the need to rejuvenate the country. Furthermore, Western sciences, humanities, arts and politics are all included in the curriculum of women's education. Hence this will lead to women having the equal rights with men, and women's breaking free from husband's harness and control, completing their education successfully and be independent of their husband. Moreover, the regulations also reflect that, while women were encouraged to acquire more modern skills and knowledge, they still needed to follow certain traditional moralistic norms, such as female accoutrement and behaviours codes. Women's education had done little to undermine the old tradition and custom. Women / girls' behaviours and appearances in public at the time are judged and scrutinized. Women's education must not challenge the mainstream ideology. Women still required to be obedient and subservient.

In order to gain more support and recognition, and to reduce resistance, the 'for' articles on women's education often began with tropes to illustrate the relationship of the two genders with the relationship of Yin / Yang, Heaven / Earth, Qian / Kun 乾坤 from Chinese traditional philosophy to prove the rationale and reasonableness of women's education. For instance:

*Qian is firmness, and Kun is softness. Those who have the virtue of Qian are men, and those who have the virtue of Kun are women. Men and women should be equal, which is just like Qian and Kun are equal and balanced. that cannot be biased, and the universe cannot be biased. If men are preferred over women, then this equates firmness is preferred over softness, and Qian is preferred over Kun. Is it the intention of heaven and earth? (论振兴女学, 1893.1.20)*

Men and women are equal, interdependent. We should treat the two genders unbiased and impartially. Hence, it is the given right for women to receive education. Some other 'for' articles argued from the historical and realistic points of view. *On Women's Education (论女学 1876.3.30)* expounded on the character “子 zi”, and pointed out that “zi” is a collective name for both son and daughter, not just for son in ancient times. Hence this means ancient

people believe that man and women are equal, no distinguish in levels of status and respect. Furthermore, women's education is very much valued in this example below:

*The queens and the duchess have learned the rituals of the Zhou. [...] Women learn alongside what they do, just like men learning their professional and guarding skills. Common girl learns from her teacher. A virtuous woman who has no children in her forties will be a female teacher. (女学堂议, 1888.1.5)*

Our nation was so prosperous because women's education was prosperous. The prosperity of the country and the education of women are also closely related.

*Teach men but not women, then only five people are useful, which is half the way. (论女学, 1876.3.30)*

Therefore, we should learn from the ancients and reject the feudal thoughts of "men are superior to women" and "women are talented without virtue". While emphasizing men's education, we should also pay attention to the development of women's education, so as to improve the cultural quality of the entire nation and truly realize the prosperity of the country.

- 2) The reformers argued that women's education will benefit the change of depraved social customs.

In the late Qing era, depraved social customs such as foot-binding and drowning baby girls etc. seriously insulted women's dignity, damaged women's rights, and affected the improvement of national quality and social development. Literati in society believe that women's lack of knowledge is the root cause of its existence and development. Therefore, the development of women's education is paramount to a fundamental change of the traditional customs. Articles argued:

*If schooling for girls can be established, girls can receive public education. All the subjects men find useful can be taught to girls. After ten years, all women will be literate. That means all women know reasons. So they will regret their feet bounding and will not bound their daughters' feet. They will not following the traditional orders. After twenty years, there will never be a woman with bound feet in China. This is how to eliminate the feet bounding from the root. (论劝戒妇女缠足以先广女塾以清其源, 1896.6.13)*

Only by educate women and make themselves aware of the endangerment of such depraved and backward customs, they can fundamentally end these bad habits, so that women can be completely liberated, both physically and mentally.

3) Women's education is the prerequisite to a strong and wealthy nation.

*If all women in China are literate, they can be taught, explained and reasoned at any time. Maybe there will be some intellectual women among them.*

*(Women's education is) once and future strategy for China. (論中國欲人人識字必先以婦女識字為始并推言婦女不讀書之害, 1897/1/17)*

*Nature is developed when one is young. Routine becomes habits. Children raised by mothers' teaching will be the pillars of our country. (论女学, 1876.3.30)*

From the economic point of view, Chinese women do not receive education, nor make profit. This caused “未嫁则仰食于父兄，已嫁则仰食于夫婿 unmarried women depending on their father and brothers; and married women depending on their husbands” and “其父兄夫婿既已全力贍其身家，又安得余力以及于他人乎 their father, brothers and husband have done everything to earn the living for them, so that they can do nothing else”. There are four hundred million people in China, and women account for about half of them. Women are confined in the family walls and do not work nor contribute to the country. Women are useless.

*“待食者如此之多，谋食者如此之寡，由人而及家，由家而及国，以一人而养数人，且有养数十人者。中土虽地大物博，安得而不贫，国安得而不弱？ There are so many doers, and so few profit makers. From people to household, from household to country, one person works to support several people, even dozens of people. Although China is vast and abundant, in this way household gets poorer, and the country gets weaker.” Hence “国虽富而贫，兵虽强而弱也 Though the country is rich and the army is strong, it gets poorer and weaker” is inevitable. “使中国省会城镇设有女学堂，聚贵贱贫富之女子一教之，与男子一视同仁，学成而后，皆有以自立于当世，可使中国民数之众有益无害，不致为废材弃物，则国可以富，兵可以强矣”。 (女学堂余议, 1889.2.22) Establish schools for women in the capital cities of all provinces, where women from rich and poor families are brought together to learn, and treated the same as men. Women can stop being useless, instead are*

*independent after graduate to benefit the Chinese people. Thus, the country will be rich and strong.”*

All these articles are saying that the current situation of poverty, backwardness and weakness in China has a lot to do with Chinese women's lack of education. If we want to change this situation, we have to establish women's education and let women learn modern subjects, be independent of men and contribute to the country. Other articles analysed the reasons for China's change from strong to weak and western countries from weak to strong from the perspective of talents, pointing out the close relationship between the level of education and the strength of the nation. Literacy is the foundation of the country's prosperity, and women's education is a prerequisite. It is therefore important for women to be educated, both for the women themselves and for the country. The emergence of women's public education bears the dreams of the intellectuals to become a modern nation.

All these conflicted representations about women's social roles embedded in the article are actually the conflicts of ideologies between conservatives and reformists in the late Qing era. Marx claimed this changing process static. The newly emerging ideologies arise because the old ideologies are no longer synchronized with the social production relationship and development. Gramsci however claims that this internal conflict changes with the changes of social history, so it is fluid and always evolving. When a new ideology was introduced to a society, it will never face a blank ideological society, but a society dominated by previous ideologies. In the new social and historical situation, people often hold on to the old common sense to provide interpretations of new phenomena. Therefore, if any new ideology intends to gain an audience, it needs to be organically integrated with the existing common sense in society. That is, it needs to redefine and reinterpret the old common sense, provide an interpretation in line with the new ideology for the existing common consciousness, memory and values in the old ideology system. Resultantly, the contradicted representations occur.

#### **5.4 Domestic Role Analysis: The Ideal Wife**

Having analysed women's public roles, this section examines women's domestic roles. Engels points out in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* that the marriage system legitimized women being utilized as tools for reproduction as well as accessories of men being locked in the cage of family. In late Qing, the issue of women's family duties became a controversial topic. As mentioned in section three, reformers like Liang Qichao, proposed that

women should be released from the family walls and participate in the society as independent “profit makers” (*shengli zhe*). However, female feminists, such as He Yin Zhen (1884-around 1920), questioned whether these reforms could truly liberate women. He Yin Zhen questioned whether women who seemed to have physical freedom, for example women who work, could “be saved” from family burdens. Additionally, He-Yin Zhen argued that liberating women’s bodies had nothing to do with the emancipation of mind (He 2013, p. 55). Furthermore, rather than simply becoming working women, women’s emancipation must begin with an economic revolution (p.103). The door to the public sphere is open for women, however, women’s main role at the time is still inside the house. What is women’s domestic role at the time? Have these new changes in the public sphere brought in any new role or changes inside? In order to answer these research questions, domestic role related words “inner” and “outer” are examined. It worth mentioning that articles describing women in the late Qing era mainly focus on women’s public roles. Women’s domestic roles are highly neglected. This is reflected in the first and second sections of this chapter. Most words generated by the Sketch Engine tools are public role related. The reason for this is that women’s domestic roles are not changed:

#### 5.4.1 *Wrapped Inside, The Confucianism Core*

Foucault (1980) believes that the bourgeois society and modern capitalism replaced the absolute monarch and exercised a positive kind of power—power over life— by emphasizing what people *should* do and through “the procedures of power that characterized the disciplines” (Foucault 1978, p. 139). For thousands of years, women were confined to the inner chamber with lifelong responsibilities of taking care of family members and running the household. This arrangement was closely related to the traditional norms of women’s virtues defined by patriarchal society and Confucianism. With the spreading of knowledge, science, and ideas from the West, late Qing era is a rapidly changing period of time. As discussed in the previous sections, women’s status in the public sphere has been greatly improved: no more bounding foot, state education for women, women can go outside in the public, etc. Many subsequent articles linked the improvement of women’s situation to a subsequent improvement in China’s national circumstances. However, women’s main role at the time is still inside the house. Some articles went further inside women’s home (Zhang 1963, p. 925-926), calling for a “family revolution” against domestic autocracy as being necessary for the national good, which in turn was defined ultimately as a revolution against political autocracy. With a sense of women’s self-awareness, attention was called to the problems—the darkness—that appeared in women’s

daily lives and within women's domestic sphere in order to encourage women to seek the way for emancipation by themselves. Modern practice like smaller families, monogamy, equal respectful husband and wife relationship are advocated.

Not many articles are describing women's domestic role in the late Qing era, as we discussed earlier that the focus is on women's public role. The women's domestic roles had experienced a complex confusion and remodelling. This was related to Liang Qichao's ideas on new women citizen. Liang combined the Confucius elitist's tradition and western thoughts. He further emphasized the value of Confucius traditional virtue for women. This readership was addressed as modern, educated, and open to a Westernized lifestyle but also retaining the virtues of a caregiving, family-oriented traditional Chinese woman. In these articles describing women's domestic role, women are still portrayed possessing traditional virtue. Examples:

*The pivotal virtue in our culture is that men and women are different. Possessing this virtue makes us human, not animals. (論中華婦女之苦, 1895.9.18)*

*Even the rude ignorant women in the countryside know the "Three Obediences and Four Virtues". I don't know what kind of horrible women who don't know to be chaste and loyal to only one man. (婦女不讀書之害, 1897.1.17)*

All these male reformers have been using women issues to convey and deliver their political ideas, to bear the dream of establishing a new country. However, reformers had been avoiding and delaying the reconstruction of the gender relationships – the gender revolution. He Yin Zhen saw the connection between the system that women are owned by men and the private property ownership, claimed that "the system that women are owned by men originated in the same time as the slavery system. These two systems are both destruction to the society (无义, 第13、14卷合刊, 1907.12.30)."

*Today, if you want to engage in social revolution, you must first start with the gender revolution. Otherwise, you will put the cart before the horse, and can only be counterproductive. (毀家談, 1908.2.18)*

*Human beings are all citizens, and then men have no reason to abuse women. Those who want to open the curtain of social revolutions must start with breaking the shackles for women in their homes. (毀家談, 1908.2.18)*

#### 5.4.2 Double Burdon

For thousands of years, women were confined to the inner chamber with lifelong responsibilities of taking care of family members and running the household. This arrangement was closely related to the traditional norms of women's virtues defined by the patriarchal society. In the sense the patriarchal power deployed the power over life by creating "docile and obedient women." Now, women are encouraged to go out and take the responsibility to 'make profit' and fulfil their part of the obligations to the nation. The discussion of women's domestic roles above expounded on women's ethical situation, that is, wrapped up nicely inside, still the same old traditional Confucianism. The following part discusses the physical duties, the household chores.

Women's daily lives, especially their family status is improved. Economic independence is encouraged in the newspapers and women played as both caregivers and working women are promoted. Since the traditional doctrines are still a must when comes to women's roles inside the house, the inside outside rules still apply. House duties are "inside", so still women's responsibility. For example: *This woman serves her mother-in-law as always. Today, she worked from early down to five in the evening without a second's rest, so she got tired and went to the bedroom to have a little rest. Because of this, she had got beaten up by her husband, sister-in-law and mother-in-law. (威姑逼婦自盡, 1875.6.2)* This article is titled "sister-in-law and mother-in-law forced woman to suicide". Although this woman's husband is responsible for her suicide as well, it is blamed on the women's sister-in-law and mother-in-law. Once again, another example of the "Gender Blame".

Compared to women with high social and economic status, lower-class women have more physical freedom. However, as a result from so-called "freedom," women of lower class had to suffer from physical burdens along with mental burdens. Because lower-class women could hardly depend on men's labour alone to support the family, they have no choice but to go out to work or sell their labour as bondservants in order to earn their keep. In many situations, beside raising children, taking care of the senior members, and managing household,

economically supporting the family becomes a lower-class women's main duty. Even though these women "enjoy" a comparative freedom of the body, they actually suffered the most ruthless exploitation. For example:

*Men go to work or do business, have no time to take care of family. Women can go to school while taking care of housework. (论女学, 1876.3.30)*

Although women's daily lives have improved, no more bounding feet, smaller families, comparative freedom to marriage, monogamy are advocated, equal gender relations, men own the material and the productive tools. Women still cannot marry freely. Women cannot be truly independent unless they are financially independent. The answer to 'not depend on men' is not to go out and work in the factory, which only make women dependent of the need for female labour in the capitalism, not ridding the fate of being enslaved. Because of the reality that men possess the production materials and the patriarchal social system, the ethical meaning of equality promoted in the late Qing era cannot be separated from the embarrassment of man superiority and women inferiority, but only as a supplement to orthodox ethics, and even suppressed and rejected by the mainstream ethics. The power to save women belongs to, and should be controlled, by women themselves. Womanhood should be achieved through fighting for a harmonious familial atmosphere and a respectable social life. These images of women portrayed in the newspapers conveys women's desire to save themselves by seeking a better life in more moderate and pragmatic ways. Although such arrangement seemed to have shown the women's way to economically self-sustain, it have actually caused the double burden for women. Because women have to take on the financial responsibility, in addition to the wife and mother responsibility, without the men sharing the burden of chores. This is simply emphasizing equality right / obligation to the state / nation between men and women, not based on the equality between men and women. Underneath, it is paving the way to promote the "new good wife and mother", and wrapping the core patriarchy / Confucianism. Additionally, because of the reality that men possess the production materials and the patriarchal social system, the ethical meaning of equality promoted in the late Qing era cannot be separated from the embarrassment of man superiority and women inferiority, but only as a supplement to orthodox ethics, and even suppressed and rejected by the mainstream ethics.

In the domestic domain, during the late Qing era, attention has been called to the problems in women's daily lives and within women's own sphere in order to encourage women to seek

ways for emancipation by themselves. Smaller family life style, the monogamy, and the equal right between husband and wife were first proposed and advocated in this era. When the two thousand years old empire system came to an end, the tradition of “xiāng cǎo měi rén 香草美人 vanilla beauty” (Chǔ cí 楚辞, Songs of Chu, Jūnwáng jūnzǐ 君王君子 gentlemen / literati’s loyalty to the emperor) has no means to place, the ideas, ambitions and expectations of the Chinese literati, together with the ideal society derivation from it, caused the making of the ideal women. Economic independence was promoted without recognising that the household burden should be shared between men and women, nor the social reality. However, women’s domestic role is still mainly confined by the traditional values, although it sugar coated with the imagination of modernization and newly brought - in western ideas.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In her latest book *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China*, Joan Judge focus on the turn of the twentieth century which she conceives as “a key moment in the unfolding of Chinese modernity” (Judge 2011, p. 2). She claimed that in this period of time, women, history and the nation interlocked and mutually reconfigured, producing new insights into the impact that these discursive dynamics had on women’s daily lives. The re-construction of women’s roles in the late Qing era generally draws on the three cultural resources: Confucian traditional culture, western modern culture, national salvation. On one hand, the impact of Western thoughts contributes to the remaking of women which question and challenge traditional orthodoxy of womanhood. But on the other hand, images of women cannot totally neglect nor break away from two thousand years Chinese traditional norms and regulations defined by men and established in the patriarchal power system. It is through negotiations with both “new ideas”, generally referred to modern western influences, and the traditional Chinese rules, featured with patriarchal characteristics, that women were shaped and described. The women’s representations in *Shen Bao* mostly reflect the ideal planning on how women should be, and this plan actually embodies their desire for national prosperity and modernization, as well as their civilization anxiety and identity crisis when facing the strong culture of the West. Women’s image in the newspapers at the time is often not a “female” image, but the new culturally re-defined image formed after an intense competition, conflict and negotiation between local culture and the Western rivals during the greatest national crisis China had ever encountered. Women’s image represents the interactions

between China's past and present, and China and the West. Such interactions are the unique feature of Chinese modernity. Women's rights were henceforth a cause which was indissolubly linked with, yet subordinate to and defined by, the interests of the nation. This link between the women's rights and nationalism has continued to the present.

In this era, the issue of women's family duties and roles became a controversial topic. Women's daily lives, especially their family status and economic situation improved. Even though women at the time "enjoy" a comparative freedom of the body / marriage, monogamy and smaller family, they actually suffer more ruthless exploitation. Such arrangement seems to have shown the women's way to economically self-sustain, however, the fact at the time is that men possess the production materials and the patriarchy nature of the Chinese society. Women cannot be truly independent. It has actually caused the double burden for women. Because women have to take on the financial responsibility, in addition to the wife and mother responsibility, without the men sharing the burden of chores. This is simply emphasizing equality right / obligation to the nation between men and women, not based on the equality between men and women. Underneath, it is paving the way to promote the "new good wife and mother", and wrapping the core of patriotism / nationalism. The acquisition of gender rights is hidden under the interests of the nation. Women must first acquire the rights to be the citizens of the nation then to fulfill the obligations to the nation. Additionally, because of the reality that men possess the production materials and the patriarchal social system, the ethical meaning of equality promoted in the late Qing era cannot be separated from the embarrassment of man superiority and women inferiority, but only as a supplement to orthodox ethics, and even suppressed and rejected by the mainstream ethics.

To conclude this chapter, the re-construction of women's representation in the late Qing era grows out of the nationalism and patriotism, trying to save China from the crisis encountered; not from the solid foundation of the true belief of the given human right nor the gender equality. Men defined women, and male reformers failed to see how that economic system perpetuated gender inequality with all of its attendant problems. Late Qing era is the burgeoning stage for women's emancipation movement in China. It opened up the curtains to the dramatic scene to China's modernization. And the yearning for moderate and pragmatic methods on women's emancipation together with establishing a modern nation continues in Chapter 6, the Republican era (1912-1949).

## Chapter 6 Republican Era (1912-1949)

### New Women and Modern Girls

The Xin Hai Revolution (1911) overthrew the Qing Dynasty, together with its dominant ideologies - Confucianism, which had been proven ineffective to modernise China. Confucianism had been the core of the Chinese belief system since the beginning of the Han Dynasty (BC 202), as the spiritual pillar of the entire society, and the constitution for the legitimacy rules of the dominant group (Rosenlee, 2006). During the Republican era Confucian traditions, especially those in the domestic domain, had been criticised and condemned (Hershatter, 2004). The women's emancipation movement emphasised family reform, gender equality, and the emancipation of the individual (Goodman, 2005). As the mainstream ideology was changing from Confucianism to nationalism, and China's first ever experimentation with the Parliamentary Constitutionalism (see Chapter 4), this chapter answers the question about how women were represented and defined in the Republican era; and how the changes of dominating ideologies affect women's representations in *Shen Bao*.

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section, **The Confused and Dilemmatic Women**, analyses the word sketches of *women* and *female gender*. By conducting an analysis of the most frequent content words (nouns, verbs and adjectives) in the corpus, particular semantic groups that are frequently addressed in the data can be identified (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a). In addition, comparative analysis of word sketch results between *women* and *female gender* will be conducted to reveal the difference in the discourse strategy.

The second section, **The Keywords and High-Frequency Words: Politicalised Representation of Women**, focus on the high-frequency words and keywords generated by Sketch Engine, identifying words that are statistically more frequent in one data set when compared against another. Such words can then be grouped together and examined in more detail to reveal unique discourse strategies. The first and second sections present the data with minimum subjective interpretations from the author of this thesis.

Sections three and four are more Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based to analyse the data generated in sections one and two. Section three, **New Woman and New Nation**, examines a set of public role related collocations and identifies women's public role, while section four, **Breaking the Family Shackle**, examines a set of domestic role related collocations to identify women's domestic representations in *Shen Bao*. Sections three and four investigate more specific women's discourse in corpus 2 (Republic era) and their underlying connection with the dominant ideologies.

The fifth section, **Conclusion** of the Republican era, summarises the main findings of the analysis, and attempts to explain the findings by linking them to the social and political context. Further questions are raised for the discussion chapter, chapter 9.

### **6.1 Word Sketch Analysis: The Confused and Dilemmatic Women**

As illustrated in Table 3.1 on page 45, corpus 2, which is the Republican era, consists of 487 articles and 608435 characters, generated and collected using the two sets of search terms “women 妇女” and “female gender 女性” (see Chapter 3). Figure 6.1 gives information on which year these 487 articles are taken from. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the course of China's modernisation overlapped with Chinese women's emancipation movements (Wang, 1999). Chinese women had been placed right in the centre of this upheaval in the Republican era. Figure 6.1 shows a gradual incline of articles every year, reaching the peak just before the full outburst of the Second World War (WWII). During WWII, attention to women from the mainstream newspapers reduced to a relatively low level, and I consider this is because the media's focus had been shifted to the war. After WWII, on the 27th of May 1949, *Shen Bao* is shut down by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the socialist era begins in China.

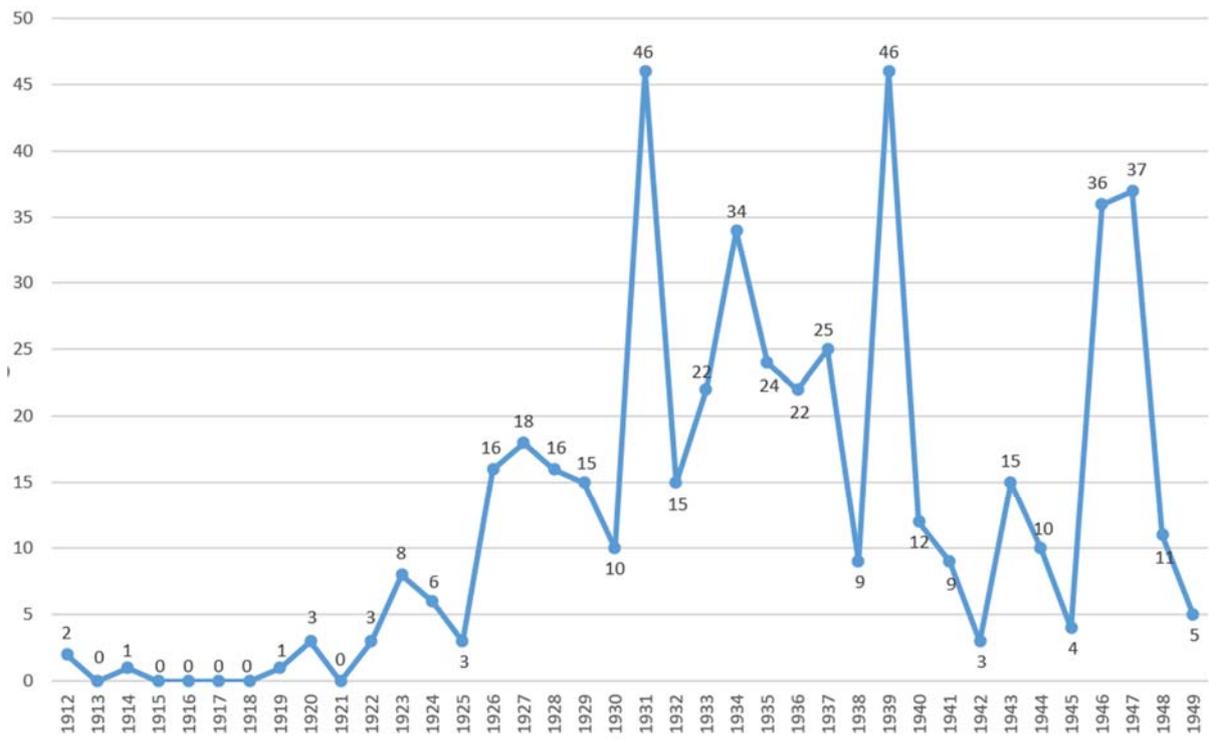


Figure 6.1 Number of Articles in the Republican Era

This section examines how the terms *women* and *female gender* are actually characterised in the corpus 2, and discusses the statistical data generated by the Word Sketch function of the software, which provides grammatical and collocational information on these two search terms *women* and *female gender*.

### 6.1.1 Word Sketch of “Women”

Figure 6.2 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of *women* in the Corpus 2 and Table 6.1 is the translation of Figure 6.2. The first column shows words that occur in the frame {Women and/or x} and {x and/or Women}. This pattern is useful in telling us about the other sorts of groups or people who tend to get associated with Women. The collocations generated here are “draft resolution Tí 'àn” and “human being Rén” {women and/or [draft resolution, human being]}. It should be mentioned that women are not listed together with men in the frame {Women and/or x}. Republican China is known for its acceptance of ideological diversity and differences. Women as human beings is first visible in the publications from central government to civil societies which proposed various draft resolutions, for example-try to liberate women and achieve modernization.

The second column {Women + [verb]} shows the collocations where women is the subject (or doer) of the verb. The most common collocates include {Women + [liberate, participate, attend, save, serve]}. Collocates such as {Women + [liberate, participate, attend]} reflect that women in the Republican era are actively included in the social and political activities. {Women + [save, serve]} call for women to contribute to serve the country, the type of discourse that was utilised to promote nationalism in the Republican era.

and/or	Subject_of	Object_of	Modifies	N_Modifier	Possessor
婦女 的一種婦女。婦女由封建制度	職業 婦女職業的	述其 三日本人述其感想南京日本婦女出席本日正式	團體 各婦女團體	職業 職業婦女	中國 來，（中國的婦女是受雙重
木 介紹“今代婦女”木“今代婦女	運動 婦女運動的	給 正能够給世界婦女以這一種領導	運動 的婦女運動	日本 日本婦女	家庭 加、正如家庭的需要婦女
提案 問題予有提案。各省婦女救國會來京二十四	解放 婦女解放	受 受壓迫的婦女	職業 婦女職業	家庭 家庭婦女	今日 今日的婦女
人 每男子一千人。婦女為	問題 婦女問題	准許該團 國民會議請願、准許該團推出之婦女列席代表二十七	解放 婦女解放運動	現代 現代婦女	
	團體 婦女團體	喚醒 婦運、已喚醒了沉迷的婦女、今後的	勞動 婦女勞動者的工資	世界 正能够給世界婦女	
	參加 都有婦女參加其間	可以 我們也可以曉得現代的婦女是怎麼樣的	問題 婦女問題	各界 聯合各界婦女、共同作	
	出席 感想南京日本婦女出席本日正式會議	代表 你們代表全世界的婦女，說出他們	協會 婦女協會	良家 良家婦女	
	救 上海市婦女救濟會	知道 知道婦女	生活 刊“婦女生活	上海市 上海市婦女救濟會	
	救國會員來 提案、各省婦女救國會員來京二十四人	使 使一部份的婦女	請願團 婦女請願團請願列席民會	各省 有提案、各省婦女救國會員來京二十四	
	與 就是“婦女與男子作同樣	對於 對於婦女	參政 婦女參政問題	港 本港婦女	
	列席 准許該團推出之婦女列席代表二十七人		雜誌 期書報評論婦女雜誌第十一卷七	本市 本市婦女	
	服務 婦女也有服務		代表 婦女代表	俄 俄婦女	

Figure 6.2 Word Sketch of “Women”

Table 6.1 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Women”

And/or	Subject of	Object of	Modifies	N-modifier	Possessor
*	*	discuss	organisations	occupation	China
*	*	give	Sports	Japanese	family
draft resolution	liberate	oppress*	occupation	domestic	today
human being	*	permit	emancipation	modern	
	*	waken	labour	world	
	participate	represent	problem	all sectors	
	attend	can	association	good family	
	save	know	lives	Shanghai	
	*	make	petition	province	
	*	pertain	participation in politics	our port	
	serve		journal	our city	
	receive*		representatives	Russia	

The third column identifies the opposite pattern, cases where the term *women* is the object of the verbs, {[verb] + Women}. Examples of verbs identified here include: {[discuss, give, permit, waken, know, make] + women}. Verbs in this column indicate *women* as a passive prosody i.e. that women need to be woken, and women are the objects to be given permission to liberate.

Columns four and five present cases where the term *women* is used as a noun modifier {Women + [noun]}, and *women* is modified by noun modifiers {[noun] + Women}. The last column shows *women* is modified by a possessor, {[possessor] + Women}. Only three collocates are generated: {[China’s, family’s today’s] + Women}. Collocates in three columns can be seen as women’s issues related to women that are of most concern in *Shen Bao*. As discussed in

Chapter 5, when a group of collocates of a particular word all seem to have a similar meaning or function, then this can be called a semantic preference of that word (Stubbs 2001).

Table 6.2 categorises these collocates.

Table 6.2 Categories of Word Sketch Collocates for “Women”

Category	Collocates
location	China, Japan, Shanghai, province, our city, Russia, world
types	good family, family, today, modern, all sectors, domestic,
Politics	Draft resolution, organisations, representatives, association,
issues	Occupation, sports, problems, emancipation, labour, problems, lives, journal,
verbs	liberate, participate, attend, save, serve, receive, discuss, give, permit, waken

From Table 6.2 the categories of the Word Sketch Collocates for “Women”, compared with the late Qing Era which focused on women’s representation in the public, where articles in the Republican era focus on women’s domestic roles. Many collocates generated are related to women’s domestic roles, such as: domestic, family, good family, which are further discussed in section four of this chapter. In addition, the impression of the Republic of China is an age of unprecedented cosmopolitanism, the origin of modernity and liberalism. However, according to Table 6.2, many collocates are politics related, such as draft resolution, organisations, representatives, association. Women in the Republican era were envisioned to be equal political participants and given public roles as citizens in a new China. Women’s representation was politicised.

### 6.1.2 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Word sketch of *female gender* is also generated. Figure 6.3 shows a screenshot of a word sketch of the word *female gender* in Corpus 2. Table 6.3 is the translation of Figure 6.3. The frame in the first column in Table 6.3 is {female gender and/or x} or {x and/or female gender}. Groups or people who tend to be associated in this frame with *female gender* can be further divided in two types: politics related such as {[parliament, society, vote, representative] + female gender} and gender related such as {[male gender, human being] + female gender}. The blooming Republican cosmopolitanism thrived in this era when the East and West converged and collided.

Women who vote and participate in the politics were highly promoted (The Chinese women's suffrage movement was promoted under the government of the Nationalist Party, also as Kuomintang KMT in the 1930s). Women became one of these symbols through which the new Parliament regime was understood and manifested; the public space of this new regime served as a proper field upon which Republican womanhood could be realized (Judge 2015, p.50).

The second column in Table 6.4 is {female gender + [verb]}. In this frame, *female gender* is the subject of the verb. Patterns of {female gender + [participate, attend, elected, occupy]} reflected the women's active participation in politics and society in the Republican era as aforementioned. {Female gender + [suicide]} reflects the severe phenomenon of women's suicide. As discussed in Chapter 5, "female suicide was an important site for the production of state-verified virtue (Goodman, 2005, p. 68)". Different from the phenomenon of women's suicide in the late Qing Era, female suicide in the Republican era "could be condemned as revealing neither virtue nor agency but, rather a general cultural malady: victimisation and the failure of self-actualisation. Acts of suicide nonetheless continued to drive enormous public interest and scrutiny (Goodman 2005, p. 69)." Women who committed suicide were generally around the age of 17-35; mostly young women in their twenties (Guan, 2019). Suicide is an individual phenomenon as well as a social phenomenon. The society of Republican China was in transition from traditional to modernity. Together with the political disorder; economic dislocation; profound national weakness and humiliation ideologically, various social contradictions and ethical disputes were increasingly intensified. Consequently, women lived in the contradicted torn world between love and hate, new and old. During the Republican era, even in relatively open-minded big cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, the society did not completely get rid of the shackles of traditional morality and Confucian ideologies. The patriarchal society continued to restrain women. However, after decades of education women were to have new ideas. Women hoped to realise their self-actualisation, independent personalities and self-esteem. Of course, this was strongly condemned by the patriarchal society. At the same time, the old thoughts lingering, and the coexistence of old and new made women self-contradictory and in self-denial, resulting in women in the Republican era being neither complete relics of the old tradition nor completely modern new women. The society is not prepared for women to use their talents to serve their society. This includes material aspects of preparation, such as providing more employment opportunities brought about by economic development, the implementing and promoting of a maternity leave system, and provision of

public childcare. The spiritual aspects of preparation include the society's real recognition of women finding employment, women's own knowledge and ability to deal with conflicts between career and family, and the lack of support from their families. Therefore, educated women are confused and dilemmatic between career and family. These contradictions can manifest as suicide to fight and rebel against the society.

Column three shows cases where *female gender* is the object of the verbs. The collocates in this frame include {[oppress, insult, molest, respect, represent] + female gender}. The fourth column shows the nouns that modify women {[N-modifier] + female gender}. This column mainly contains collocates that referred to the location of women (e.g., {[China, France, America] + female gender}) and types of women (e.g., {[good family, family, today, modern, all types, domestic] + female gender}). The fifth column is where *female gender* is modified by an adjective, {[adj] + female gender}. It is worth mentioning, the Republican era is the only era that {[adj] + female gender} is generated in the word sketch function, with {[healthy and beautiful, abnormal] + female gender} as the most common patterns. The sixth column in Table 6.3 is when *female gender* is used in the possessive form, {female gender + [noun]}. Collocates in this column can be seen as issues that are related to women. Compared with the word sketch generated using the other search term women, there are more descriptions on how the female gender's appearance, such as {female gender + [mind, body etc]} in the sixth column and the {[adj] + female gender} in the fifth column.



Figure 6.3 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Table 6.3 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

<b>And/or</b>	<b>Subject of</b>	<b>Object of</b>	<b>N-modifier</b>	<b>A-modifier</b>	<b>Possession</b>
Parliament	*	insult	China	healthy and beautiful	*
society	*	molest	organisation	abnormal	struggle
male gender	*	respect	all types of	mordern*	mind
vote	*	*	*		body
female gender	worship	*	beauty		
representative	participate	concerning	*		
human being	attend	represent	*		
	suicide	resemble	France		
	occupy	*	bureau		
	elected	*	America		
	not only	*	*		
	need	provide	*		
	can	oppress*	employee*		
			postwomen*		

Table 6.4 Categories of Collocates for the Word “Female Gender”

Category	Collocates
Location	China, France, America,
Types	good family, family, today, modern, all types, domestic, healthy and beautiful, abnormal
Politics	Parliament, vote, representative, organisation
issues	Struggle, mind, body, beauty, employee, postwoman
Verbs	participate, attend, suicide, elected, occupy, oppress, insult, molest, respect, represent

Table 6.4 summarises some of the key points that emerged from looking at these word sketches. As shown in the table, the word sketch of *female gender* revealed a number of characteristics that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. First of all, women’s domestic roles are highlighted with collocates like family and domestic as shown in the table. Compared to the word sketches of *women*, there are collocates of *female gender* related directly to women’s traits or appearance: {female gender + [mind, body etc]} and {[healthy and beautiful, abnormal] + female gender}. The presentation of *female gender* in the *Shen Bao* is characterised by an undermining attitude towards their competence by highlighting their feminine body. The third difference indicates that *female gender* is the object to criminate and includes {[oppress, insult, molest] + female gender}. Both the word sketches of *women* and *female gender* collocates are politics related. Women’s status in the political field include party and organization which are constantly highlighted. Figure 6.4 shows the visualisations that summarise the difference between the word sketches of *women* and *female gender* generated by the Sketch Engine. While this section has considered the larger patterns across the whole corpus 2, data generated patterns employing other important statistical tools in corpus linguistics are examined in the next section.

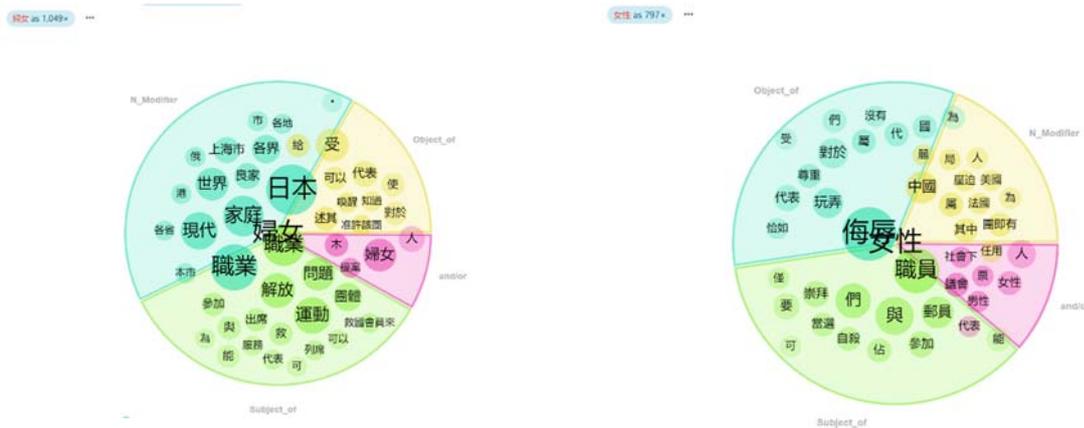


Figure 6.4 Visualizations of Word Sketches of “Women” and “Female Gender”

## 6.2 Keywords and High-Frequency Words: Politicalised Representation of Women

High-frequency words are expected to reflect the subject matter of the articles in a corpus. For corpus 2, the top 10 high frequency words in the Republican era are: representative Dàibiào, work gōngzuò, chairman zhǔxí, men nánzǐ, government zhèngfǔ, Nanking nánjīng, life shēnghuó, Japan rìběn, society shèhuì, politics zhèngzhì. The majority of these high-frequency words are politics related as discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

A keyword is a word that occurs more frequently in one corpus than in another corpus. Keyword analysis reveals the different contexts about which women are written (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b). The method of categorising keywords is a fairly subjective process. Concordances are checked to analyse the context. Figure 6.5 shows the screenshot of the keywords list in corpus 4, and Table 6.5 is the translation of Figure 6.5. Surprisingly, most keywords generated are politics related as shown in Table 6.5. Women’s representations in the Republican era are closely connected with political discourse. Scholars find women’s representations in the socialist era are politicalised (Croll, 1983; Evans, 1997; Gordon, 2013; Wang, 2005), but not women’s representations in the Republican era, as Republican China is famous for its cosmopolitan culture. In the movement of women’s participation in politics in the Republican era, women’s representation of “good family women” turned into women with political awareness and actively participating in politics, breaking the traditional norm that women were not allowed to interfere in political affairs. This newly constructed image of women indicates that women’s responsibilities are no longer limited to family, but also in the

public undertaking of political affairs for the country or society. They are no longer silent and invisible, but are actively fighting for their rights as citizens of this country.

The screenshot shows a web interface for a 'KEYWORDS' list. At the top, there is a search bar with the number '2' and a search icon. To the right, there is a notification: 'Account expires in March 2022 - Get more space'. Below the search bar, there are two tabs: 'SINGLE-WORDS' and 'MULTI-WORD TERMS', both with checkmarks. The main content area is titled 'reference corpus: Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17) Traditional (items: 49,407)'. Below this title is a table with 5 columns, each labeled 'Word'. The table contains 50 rows of terms, numbered 1 through 50. Each term is followed by three dots (...).

Word	Word	Word	Word	Word
1 國民會議	11 文部省美術	21 查委員會	31 影片公司	41 女解放
2 女代表	12 國民政府	22 婦女問題	32 新鹽法	42 討論事項
3 新聞事業	13 男女平等	23 中央執行委	33 節制生育	43 國代表
4 女運動	14 修正為	24 約法草案	34 程序案	44 女職員
5 女青年會	15 婦女職業	25 訓政時期	35 女職業	45 政治總報告
6 婦女運動	16 建設程序	26 國民大會	36 女青年會	46 我們中國人
7 婦女團體	17 議事日程	27 各界婦女	37 武則天	47 選舉罷免
8 女同胞	18 作品號數	28 大會代表	38 國議代表	48 廢約宣言
9 建國大綱	19 體代表	29 婦女解放	39 婦女代表	49 政治總報
10 提案審查委	20 新女性	30 省代表	40 民會代表	50 教育經費

Figure 6.5 Screenshot of Keywords List

Table 6.5 Translation of the Keyword List

<b>citizen conference</b>	<b>Culture Bureau</b>	<b>committee</b>	<b>movie company</b>	<b>emancipation</b>
women representative	Republican government	women problems	new salt law	matter discussed
news reporting career	gender equality	central action committee	birth control	representative
women movement	justification	law drafts	procedure draft	women clerk
young women's association	women occupation	Political Training *	women's career	political report
women's movement	construction programme	citizen's conference	young women's association	our Chinese
women's organisation	conference schedule	women from all sectors	Wu Ze Tian	election and dismissal
sisters	artwork number	conference representative	parliament member	void declaration
party manifesto	representative	women's emancipation	women representative	political reports
Drafts review	new woman	provincial representative	Congress representative	education funding

\*Political Training: 训政 Xun Zheng can only be used to depict the regime during the Chiang Kai-shek presidency. According to Sun Yat-sen's *Outline of the Founding of the Republic of China (1924)*, the founding of China is divided into three stages: military administration, political training, and constitutional government. Political training, Xun Zheng, is the second stage. Sun Yat-sen believed that with the intelligence level of the Chinese people at that time, it was unable to exercise power as the master of the country. Therefore, it was necessary for the Kuomintang to train and teach the people in order to enlighten them. The ultimate goal of the political training is the construction of the Republic of China, a democratic country. That is also the final stage of "constitutional government".

Combined with the keywords, I have categorised these high-frequency words and keywords into groups illustrated by Table 6.6 below. Politics related collocates account for the biggest

category in Table 6.6, which echoes the findings in the previous section of this chapter. The women’s issues category is mainly concerned with women’s education and employment in the public sphere. These keywords and high-frequency words in corpus 2 are now divided into two categories: social role related collocates in the public sphere and family role related collocates in the domestic sphere, which will be discussed respectively in the next two sections.

Table 6.6 Categories of High-Frequency Words and Keywords

Category	words
politics	citizen conference, Culture Bureau, women representative, Republican government, new salt law, matter discussed, central action committee, political report, construction programme, citizen’s conference, young women’s association, conference schedule, election and dismissal, women representative, political reports, party manifesto, provincial representative, Congress representative, Drafts review, committee, conference representative, parliament member, void declaration, representative, law drafts, procedure draft, Political Training, party manifesto
occupation	news reporting career, women clerk, movie company
issues	gender equality, birth control, women’s career, women problems, women’s emancipation, emancipation, women movement, women occupation, education funding
organization	women’s organisation, young women’s association
Description of women	new woman, sisters, women from all sectors, Wu Ze Tian

### 6.3 Social Role Analysis: New Woman and New Nation

This section discusses the collocates generated in sections one and two of Chapter 6, selecting public role related terms, “New Woman” and “Modern Woman”, putting them into context and providing explanations.

#### 6.3.1 *New Woman and Modern Girl*

As far as the women’s emancipation movement is concerned, the late Qing Era focused on women’s obligations towards the nation, while the Republican era pays more attention to women’s rights and self-awareness. In the Republican era, women as human beings was first

discussed, although from the very beginning, women were closely connected with the nation's empowerment and stamped with political connotations (Judge, 2015). In the Republican era, traditional women's roles were successfully deconstructed to a certain extent. Some Chinese male intellectuals with revolutionary and Western ideas have expressed their support of women breaking the shackles of the patriarchal system and becoming new women in the new society. Examples of the promotion of gender equality in the articles of *Shen Bao* include:

*Men are human beings. Women are also human beings. Men and women are equal. Men and women have no difference.* (家常琐谈释义, 1923.11.25 第19版 第18230期)

*Nowadays, science is advanced and people are enlightened. Men and women are equal in intelligence has been recognized by all. Both men and women deserve equal opportunities to develop their talents.* (妇女问题谈, 1923.10.21 第21版 第18195期)

*Women are also human beings. There is no need to separate women's everything from men's as "bridge to bridge, road to road". [...] As Kuriyagawa Hakuson (Japanese literary critic) said it well: "The relationship between men and women in cultural life is like that in a two-person, three-feet competition. No matter how well one can run, if the other person cannot, it's impossible to succeed."* (给妇女读的书, 1933.09.21)

The so called "new women" in the modern society of Republican China refers to women with higher education and independent economic ability. New Woman is different from women who are attached to traditional families dominated by father, husband and brothers under the framework of Confucian doctrine. The most important aspect of being a new woman is to seek economic and personal independence, and find employment (Gardiner, 1993). According to Rey Chow (1986, p. 72), the word "new (xīn)" used in the Republican era "appeared as a sign of change. This desire for the new quickly acquired the force of an ideological imperative that successfully rationalised China's contact with the West." Barlow (Barlow, 1994, p. 58) points out that in China, the new women were imbued with "nationalist universality in a masculinist discourse." Some articles advocate that in order to achieve women's independence the starting point should be women's education and family reform, however, most articles believe that economic independence is the reason for women's oppression, and women's employment is the prerequisite for women's emancipation and consequently the resultant national prosperity. Articles on disputes surrounding new women are due to the life realities that they encountered

in the process of stepping out of traditional family and trying to pursue the “new women” lifestyle. Examples that strengthen the importance of economy independence include:

*The true emancipation of women requires economic independence. (各省市婦協代表聯席會宣言, 1929.03.06 第7版 第20098期)*

*It is even more unreasonable for the women to go back to the family and be a good wife and mother alone. Because family is formed by the combination of man and woman, the society is also formed by the combination of men and women. Hence, the country is formed by the combination of men and women. Therefore, social undertakings require women to participate, as the family needs women to participate. (本市婦女界昨一致慶祝“三八”節, 1935.03.09. 第9版 第22223期)*

*New women should be self-reliant. Use their hands and brains. Aspire to be teachers, mechanics, engineers, pilots, physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and politics. (新女性的“再出發”, 1946.02.21. 第4版 第24429期)*

Also, parallel comparison between women’s subordination to men and non-white people’s subordination to white people are made and well received by many previous intellectuals such as Liang Qichao. Given the context that at that time when China was under the encroachment of imperialist countries led by white people, this parallelism subtly equated the Chinese nation’s weakness with women’s enslavement. Thus, save women was equated to save China. Rey Chow (Chow & Bowman, 2010, p. 104) had similar a reading of “China-as-woman” in her interpretation of the film *The Last Emperor* directed by Bertolucci.

*Only focusing on women self-encouraging themselves is far from enough. This is just like the small and weak nations in the world, they definitely need self-encouragement to resist imperialism, However, self-encouragement alone without uniting with other weak and small nations to fight in unison, will inevitably fail due to isolation and helplessness. (怎樣自勉自勵, 1935.08.18 第18版 第22383期)*

In this context, the ‘new women’ came to figure as the privileged signifier of the modern Chinese nation. I argue that there are a number of reasons behind this. First, according to Edwards, “Chinese women were traditionally credited with responsibility for saving or

destroying the nation, making natural use of the new woman as a symbol of national survival for the enlightened intellectual class in the twentieth century” (Edwards, 2000, p. 125). Images of the “new women” were therefore being utilised to resolve national predicaments such as political instability, economic disarray, and social disorder. Second, inherited from the precious late Qing Era, the inferior position of Chinese women was regarded to be a crucial signpost of national weakness and shame (see Chapter 5). The transformation of the female body was therefore more imperative. Third, from a global eugenic point of view, the physical vigour of the female body was necessary to ensure the stronger next generation, the revitalization of the Chinese race. Stronger women mean stronger next generation (Liu, 2010).

Another conspicuous aspect is the excessive attention on women’s physical appearance. The rhetoric extolling dutiful and virtuous womanhood stood in contradiction to the image of the modern and robust female body. Many articles linked the elimination of loose morality and prostitution to a complete program of social reform, in which the effective regulation of the women’s physical body was to play a crucial part. Mixing Confucianism and Christianity, the campaign endorsed an image of the Chinese citizen that accorded with the ideology of “传统与现代于一体 a modern yet traditional woman (Chen and Liang, 1997, p. 27)”. Modern looks, yet were seen to be without innate virtues. Women who focus on their looks are vain and superficial. The emergence and existence of modern women posed a major threat to the patriarchal society. Therefore, they have been criticised and satirised by the public (Gardiner, 1993). Examples include:

*The idea that dressing fashionably equates a new woman is a huge fallacy. It is such a misunderstanding. I hope the new women will not only be new in appearance, but be new within, with revolutionary spirit. (現代女子的謬誤觀念, 1932.07.13 第20版 第21288期)*

*Most women comrades who have careers can work hard. However, at the same time they are found to have several drawbacks: eager to be fashionable, dress up and put on make-up, so that gives people opportunities to call you void flower vase. Less focus and driven on their career. Not loyal to one man because of women’s vanity, have no perseverance; because they have a job, they give up family duties. (關於婦女職業的談話, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)*

*Except for a few educated women who got the title of the “flower vase”, and some educated women who had become the concubines. The rest of them were either still working as slaves in the family, or embarked on the fate of the prostitute A Ling, the “Boatman’s Daughter \*” (a movie released in 1935). What’s the reason for this? “The “Boatman’s Daughter” suggests in its prologue that the men and women who promote Women’s Emancipation Movement are demons. Although their slogans are loudly shouted, and their propaganda efforts are vigorous, the men themselves are playboys who toy with women, and women themselves are toys for men to play with. (藝壇, 評 “船家女”, 1935.12.08 第18版 第22494期)*

*\*The film concerns the misfortunes of an innocent woman, Ah Ling, who lives with her father in Hangzhou, where they rent a boat transporting passengers across the West Lake. Ah Ling is in love with Tie’er, a factory worker who takes her boat every day. The peaceful life is disrupted by the appearance of a playboy artist from Shanghai. For his father’s debt, Ah Ling is soon sold into prostitution. Three months later, Tie’er finds her in a brothel and tries to free her and he is arrested. (Encyclopedia of Chinese Film, ed.Xiao Zhiwei, Zhang Yingjin)*

*Unfortunately, the jobs for women are all in the hands of the devil. Hiring female teachers is to be the job of the principal’s wife. Recruiting female staff to work in a pretended agency, which is actually a disguised brothel. Examples as such can be seen in social news all the time. (大上海的陷阱, 1937.03.06 第17版 第22927期)*

Furthermore, articles actively discouraged the culture of consumption and materialism, and a Confucian-inflected model of the “good wife and good mother” was promoted. In their modern incarnations, such notions emphasised women’s roles as mothers of good citizens. Thus, if the modern female body could be developed in ways that could contribute to collective and national emancipation, it could also represent potential threats to China during this period. The contradictory portrayals of women reflected the ruling class’s insecurity and anxiety.

*The love of luxury and the desire for vanity are the most common ills for women, especially those who grow up deep in the city. Those women are influenced by the concepts of fame and wealth most deeply and find it most difficult to get rid of flashy habits. Be aware that pompousness and vanity are not good things. Since the emergence*

*of urban society, I don't know how many sins have happened and caused misery because of it! I hope my fellow sisters will be strong and don't fall into this deep pit.*  
(蔡元培夫人, 對婦女講話, 1939.09.03 第16版 第23532期)

*The purpose of this women's training is to correct women's bad habits of extravagance and vanity in the past, and to cultivate the hard-working spirit to become modern new women.* (閩婦女受訓, 1938. 06. 20 漢口版 第1版 第23365期)

Much of this nationalist discourse was focused on struggling with a clear line of separation between the authentic New Woman and her negative counterparts: the Modern Women / Girl (摩登女), which refers to women that were shaped by superficial Westernisation, materialism, moral corruption, greed, and the backward, female emancipation and spiritual pollution. Modern women / girls are not at the forefront of the times in revolutionary thought and action, but only in physical appearance. Modern Girl has strong negative prosody throughout the entire corpus 2. “摩登 Mó dēng” is the transliteration of “modern”, which means fashionable, and relates to the present or recent times. It should have been a neutral word. With the intellectuals eagerly seeking the modernisation of China, they began to break through the tradition in every aspect, trying to create new values and new definitions. Therefore, the avant-garde words such as “modern”, “new” and “advanced” have a positive connotation (Stevens, 2003). Everything with these prefixes are good, legitimised, and should be promoted, such as: new novels, new dramas, new youth, and new women. However, this connotation is altered where *female* follows after *modern*. The context of modern girl or woman should be discussed first. With the constant military strife within the country and imperialist attacks from outside, Republican China's fear of losing its nationality led to a complicated dual psychology of worship and resistance to the West. Although women also play a role in social change, the construction, dissemination and interpretation of women's images are controlled by men. Modern women's and girls' seductive bodies and gestures symbolise both the expansion of man's desire as well as their fear.

For instance, in the example below, articles of women in this era circulated within a discourse of illicit sexuality and undomesticated femininity which could threaten to contaminate Chinese society. Much of this criticism had to associate with the fact that women were no longer bound to the home but free to circulate in public spaces, no longer in man's control. It is, in fact, the

reflection of man's anxiety. Hence, "Modern girls" are more of a construction of the imagination of popular culture than a real group. As Japanese scholar Sakamoto Hiroko claimed in her article *Modern Girls in Pictorials in the Republic of China*: "They (referring to modern girls) are being described as icons of consumer culture by the men who are the standard-bearers of the New Culture Movement" (Sakamoto 2007, p. 74). A paradox appeared in the women's emancipation movement in the 1930s: when women acquired social status and economic independence, they inevitably fell into the trap of being objectified and consumed. In terms of this representation, there is only a thin line between modern woman and prostitute (Sakamoto, 2007).

*Today's so-called modern women are commodities to be sold before marriage, flower vases in society, and accessories of their husbands after marriage. (谈现代中国的妇女, 1933.09.30)*

On the one hand, modern countries put forward the requirements for women to go outside the family and contribute to society. On the other hand, due to the Confucian tradition, women are also required to be economically and emotionally attached to men. Therefore, women in the Republican era encounter various problems in the process of establishing their own subjectivity. Due to the deep-rooted Confucian patriarchal culture, women's emancipation movements in the Republican era were superficial and pro forma. Once in contact with real problems in life, this women's subjectivity will be shaken.

### 6.3.2 *Women's Discourse and Science discourse*

In the Republican era, science is highly promoted. It is believed that science is the cure to a backward situation. Hence, women's discourse is often found linked with scientific discourse. This scientific discourse relating to women's representation can be categorised into three types based on the purpose:

#### (1) Enlightening women using scientific reasons

Women are expected to shoulder and deliver the above-mentioned roles to contribute to the society and nation. In addition to receiving education and finding employment, deeper scientific explanation is needed to enlighten women. Many articles use scientific reasons to

enlighten women to discard their backward habits; to be ‘new woman’; to bear and raise the next generation with the strongest genes.

*Malnutrition is the reason for the prevalence of this maternal disease. The other even worse cause, prolonged sitting or standing, can damage the development of a woman’s pelvis. This hazard affects not only women themselves, but also the next generation, race. (婦女職業與待遇, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)*

*Housewives should understand more than anyone else that children are not the private property of one family, but the cornerstone of our country. We should not only educate our children to become people who dedicate to the family, but also especially educate them to become loyal and brave citizens of our country. (告全國婦女書, 1940.03.08 第9版 第23709期)*

*In recent years, culture has progressed, and science has become prosperous. All theories advocated are based on science. Therefore, many theorists on marriage issues advocate that the choice of spouse should be made by both men and women themselves. (昨請馬丁夫人演講, 1936.04.08 第10版 第22607期)*

*Scientific parenting raises healthy children. (倡辦託兒所的提議, 1932.08.18 第19版 第21324期)*

*A healthy citizen is born of a healthy mother. Therefore, if one wants to strengthen the younger generation, one must first strengthen the mothers. (提倡生育, 1933.12.13 第18版 第21793期)*

*Women must fight, and women should be confident that we are human beings too, not slaves, not possessions of men, let alone their toys! For our mind, we should strive to wash away those bad old ideas and develop a new scientific view. (中国妇女的前途, 1934.05.19 第21版 第21940期)*

(2) The scientific explanation on the difference between genders.

Generally speaking, the social structure of the gendered labour division and the social cognition of gender roles are directly related to the public’s perception of gender differences. During the

Republican era, under the impetus of the New Culture Movement and the Women's Emancipation Movement, social debates on gender issues are unprecedented. The mass media published a large number of articles discussing the differences between the genders, from the perspectives of literature, philosophy, history and so forth, in various areas of personality, love, marriage, and family. Among them, some articles began to compare the biological, physiological and psychological differences between the genders in detail from a scientific perspective, then utilise science discourse to maintain the existing gender division structure, or to legitimise the re construction of a new gender division structure and new roles for women. To some extent, this not only reflects the importance of science discourse at the time, but also reveals the gender discourse strategies.

There were two conflicting opinions to the scientific explanation of gender differences. Some articles believe that there are differences in abilities between the two genders, which makes women better at family roles. However, openly advocating confining women to the domestic domain for this reason is not a politically correct thing to say. Most articles, on the other hand, believe there is no inherent difference in intelligence or ability between genders, although there are obvious differences in terms of physiology, psychology, personality, and emotion. These articles provide scientific evidence as an objective basis for the desired women's roles. This discourse strategy bypasses the trap of biological determinism and attributes the inequality in occupational labour division between men and women on acquired environmental and social factors. This not only provides reasons for women to fulfill their national obligations, but also makes women's emancipation possible through social reforms.

*There are excellent female talents working in all kinds of modern trades: the possibility of women having a career is out of the question. However, according to the results of scientific researches, the concerns of women's biological defects cannot be ignored.*  
(婦女職業與待遇— 關係種族健康, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)

*In the past, most women were considered weaker than men because of their physical structure, so they were considered not as good as men when studying the philosophy and science. Now the education authorities have eliminated this problem putting PE classes in women's education to make women as strong as men, without depriving them of their original beauty.* (梅云鵬夫人说法国女子教育, 1921.07.12 第14版 第17380期)

### (3) The images of women scientists.

The third type of science discourse in *Shen Bao* is the articles that introduce the deeds of Chinese and foreign female scientists. These articles basically describe female scientists as diligent, hardworking, ambitious, capable people who make contributions to society, and positively affirm the achievements and contributions of women in the field of science. Women have made outstanding contributions in various fields of science, and society should recognise their value and abilities. This bias that women cannot study, advance their knowledge and undertake professional jobs has now been shattered by the facts that are witnessed by all. Through these representations, women are encouraged to get out of their homes, pursue careers, and contribute to the country.

*There have also been three female cabinet ministers in France in recent years, one of whom I know of is the daughter of Madame Curie. They are all academically knowledgeable women, and they are able to hold a distinguished position. It is by no means wishful thinking (that women can hold high positions). (蔡元培夫人對婦女講話, 1939.09.03 第16版 第23532期)*

*There are 1467 scientific researchers in the national science institutions across the country, and 91 out of 1467 are women. Among all the qualified scientists in the country, there are 7,000 women and 16,000 men. There are a total of 20,000 technical inventions registered under women. (這樣才可說男女平等, 1939.10.01 第16版 第23560期)*

*According to the articles, the presentation of female scientists has been granted positive comments. Analysing these texts, society's views on the professional role of female scientists are shown to be positive. The articles all affirmed that women can make a difference in the field of science. Female scientists are regarded as role models for Chinese women.*

*New woman should be self-reliant. Use their hands and brains. Aspire to be teachers, mechanics, engineers, pilots, physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and politics. Dedicate yourself to social, educational and cultural lines of works, devote yourself to scientific researches, and seek new developments in all sectors of trade in agriculture, industry and commerce. (新女性的“再出發”, 1946.02.21 第4版 第24429期)*

### 6.3.3 *Sisterhood as a Form of Political Class*

With the fast-blooming newspapers in the Republican era and women's improved literacy level, it is not impossible to address women as an integral part of society, giving them information about the world beyond women's quarters, and create a feeling of group identification. Articles that promote sisterhood among women as well as a feeling of identification with the nation as a whole are found to be common. In these articles, readers are continually addressed as sisters or women comrades, with the emphasis on their common bond of Chinese womanhood. This collective womanhood signified and strengthened the collectivism of women as an oppressed group in the context of pursuing national salvation. For example:

*All women across the country unite. Emancipate twenty million sisters! (各省市婦協代表聯席會宣言, 1929.03.06 第7版 第20098期)*

The articles urged women to become aware of their desperate and isolated condition and take initiative to change it. The editor of the *Journal of Women's Studies* (*Nǚ xuébào*) spoke of her reasons for writing (in the April edition 1903, p. 8): "I write in order to exhort my two hundred million sisters. [...] I truly hope that all of you will read and act accordingly." With the widening spread of radical nationalism, the path of emancipation in China during this era has shifted from the enlightenment of humanistic individual liberalism to the enlightenment of collectivism to awaken the masses and stimulate class consciousness. Hu Shih (1891-1962, who is widely recognised today as a key contributor to Chinese liberalism and language reform) recorded in his diary in 1933 that, before 1923, revolution mostly focused on individual emancipation; and after 1923, both the nationalist movement and the communist movement focused on collective emancipation. Therefore, with this trend, the Chinese women's emancipation movement also reflected this turn.

All the newly fast-growing women's pro-equal rights groups, women's clubs, women's publications, organisations and so forth united all women who used to scatter around their home. As the weaker half of the society, one woman's voice cannot be heard. However, united, women can make a voice which can be heard. They began to participate in social lives as groups, fighting for their rights; protecting their interests; hoping for a better life. This has resulted in a positive promotion of the intelligence and knowledge of many women. Each woman's group acts like a school, educating women about gender equality and the importance of women's self-

awareness. They have gained more knowledge, contributing their part, participating in community activities, and even exerting their influence to other women who have not yet joined the groups. Eventually, groups of women absolutely boosted and influenced the social culture of the time. Collective womanhood was inevitably subjugated to the demands of nationalism. However, this connotation of womanhood underwent significant transformation as women themselves began to engage more in debates and became active partakers of nationalism and the Women's Emancipation Movement in the Republican era. Examples include:

*The education cannot cover every woman in the country, the technology has not reached to all women. So that the female compatriots have not yet been in contact with each other, which has a great influence on the future of the female compatriots. (婦女大眾職業, 1939.05.25 第18版 第23431期)*

*Wake up, Chinese women. Rise up and unite, China's new women. The future of the new China requires the concerted efforts of our 20 million women! (婦女節獻詞, 1943.03.08 第2版 第24754期)*

*Women must unite and fight on the same front. There is strength in unity. And emancipation can only be achieved by uniting and persevering in the struggles. (職工婦女的奮鬥途徑, 1934.03.09 第18版 第21870期)*

*Dear aunts and sisters across the country. (告全國婦女書上海婦女界發表告全國婦女書文云, 1940.03.08 第9版 第23709期)*

The aim of the sisterhood discourse is to unite women across the whole country and even the whole world into a revolutionary alliance, and strive for the emancipation of women all over the world. The most important statement in this sisterhood discourse is that women all belong to the oppressed class, and women should actively participate in the national movement for self-salvation. In this way, the Women's Emancipation Movement was incorporated into the national movement, not only to achieve the goal of the Women's Movement, but also to realise the revolutionary strategies, ideas and goals of the nation. Unity strengthens the struggle. However, the sisterhood is not viewed as a revolutionary achievement for which the Women's Emancipation Movement should fight. Instead, this sisterhood is built on the sense of shared

oppression. The idea of this shared oppression is a false statement that obscures and obfuscates the essence of the various complex social realities of women in different strata.

#### 6.4 Domestic Role Analysis: Breaking the Family Shackle

As aforementioned in the Word Sketch analysis of this chapter, articles in *Shen Bao* in the late Qing Era focused on the public roles of women, and many articles are describing women's domestic roles in the Republican era. Chinese traditional society was built on agricultural economy, which was family-oriented. Therefore, the constituent unit of Chinese society is not individual but family. It is believed in the Republican era that the traditional family system is the root of all evil. Women's emancipation movements started to first condemn and then revolutionise the big family system. For example:

If you are willing to go to the old and new families to actually experience it, you will know the seriousness of the abuse of women imposed by this force in the family. (襲尹霞女士的死因續, 1934.05.19)

For thousands of years, women were confined to the inner chamber with lifelong responsibilities for taking care of family members and running the household. This arrangement was closely related to the traditional norms of women's virtues defined by the Confucian doctrines dominating the patriarchal society. As discussed in Chapter 5, although women's status in the domestic sphere has been greatly improved, for instance, the denouncement and abolition of traditional arranged marriage, the wife's dependence on the husband, and the practice of concubines. The new form of marriage based upon free choice and spiritual union, mutual respect and gender equality are promoted. The connection between a happy marriage and social well-being were also stressed. By emphasizing happy marriage's relevance to a society's well-being, women's pursuit of happy marriage is justified.

*Women's "career problems" are closely related to "marriage problems". (婦女職業的商榷, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)*

*True freedom must be free from economic constraints. Otherwise, relationship will inevitably have a copper stench, and marriage will be a long-term prostitution agreement. (飛鳥哲學, 1933.02.19)*

In June 1918, Hu Shih translated Norwegian playwright Ibsen's masterpiece *The House of Puppets* into *Nora* and published it on the *New Youth* (1915 – 1926). It strongly influenced both the New Culture Movement and the later May Fourth Movement, which indicated the debut of the brand-new women's image in the Republican era. Women's author Lu Yin (1898 - 1934) commented on *Nora* which annotated women's spiritual pursuance at that time: "In the future, the way out for women is to break through the barriers of the family and go out into society, and to escape from the destiny of being puppets in the family, and live the life that human beings deserve, not just as women, but as human beings (Wu, 2016)". Mao Dun (1896 - 1981), the essayist, journalist, novelist, and playwright had expressed the similar view that the spirit of *Nora* is to be a dignified human being. Therefore, it was commonly believed among the intellectuals at the time that the guidelines of the Women's Emancipation Movement was the so-called "Noraism" which refers to "women are human beings too". The women's issues raised during the Republican era are, in fact, how can women break free from the family shackles; how can women participate in economic and social development equally; how can women enjoy equal human rights?

The New Culture Movement brought many new customs, trends, and practices. However, the beliefs of the "unquestionable husband's right", "women's duty of supporting husband and looking after children", and the traditional women's "three obedience and four virtues" are still dominating society. Articles calling for women to fulfil public duties and be economically independent does not mean the denial of the expectation of the traditional female role of "good wife and mother". In addition, the promoted "family housework education (also as domestic science) 家政 jiā zhèng" for girls that emerged in the cities, demonstrates its ultimate purpose is nothing more than to cultivate "new women" to dedicate their lives to the family, the new "virtuous wife and good mother", and ultimately, the nation (Schneider, 2011). Although there is positive significance and reasonable connotation to the newly constructed representation of "virtuous wife and good mother" in this specific historical era, it is unavoidable to further solidify the existing perception that family housework is women's duty. Confucius elitist tradition and Western thoughts are combined and the value of Confucius traditional virtue for women are emphasised. This readership was addressed as modern, educated, and open to a Westernised lifestyle but also retaining the virtues of a caregiving, family-oriented traditional Chinese woman.

*Wu Yifang stated that a new woman should be the centre of the family, a good citizen, and possess a successful career. (吴贻芳论新女性, 1946.10.18)*

*Women should take it as their bounden duty to take care of their families and raise their children, not to be able to earn a living independently. (婦女主持家政便是生利, 1921.06.20 第17版 第17356期)*

*For all the reasons discussed above and also the nature of women, women are suitable and must be responsible for the household duties. (婦女的道路, 1947.01.07 第10版 第24747期)*

*Even in Japan, silking, cooking, sewing, are listed as compulsory subjects in women's education. Everything is being re-trained in our country now. I think this "training school for mothers" might be a very good thing to imitate at once. (訓練母親學校, 1937.06.23 第19版 第23034期)*

There are also various interpretations of the traditional "good wives and mothers" intending to legitimise the oppression of women in the domestic sphere, linking this idea to the development of the nation and society, so as to emphasis women's domestic duties in this new social cultural context. Articles consider family as the cardinal constituent cell of society, so that women's contribution to the household is, in turn, the contribution to society. Women's hard work at home is not just for one man and not just for one household, instead, it is for the whole society, whole nation, for the greater good.

*For married women, housekeeping, looking after the husbands, the upbringing of their children, and other domestic responsibilities are the most important. Women have already fulfilled their duties by being an excellent housekeeper and virtuous mother and wife. Although she does not serve in the public world, she has contributed to society and the country. Hence, it is not compulsory for women to serve in the public. (關於婦女職業的談話, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)*

*...as a housewife, all household chores should be taken care of by housewives, such as sweeping, washing, cooking, and looking after children and other family members. (論婦女處家應具之道德, 1921.09.11 第13版 第17441期)*

*To promote women's careers, we must first promote women's education. Parents must enrol their daughters in schools to receive education so that they can find noble careers in the future. Without education, where can they find a good career! Once women have a career, they still have to take on domestic duties. House work must not be ignored.* (婦女職業的高權, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)

*Some people criticise that my proposition is still inevitable as the promotion of "women are accessories of men". However, this statement is very reasonable. Because in today's society, except for a very small part, everyone whether men or women are being oppressed. It's better to be an accessory to your husband than to be an accessory to someone else.* 婦女職業, 1934.03.23 第18版 第21884期

*Most women comrades who have careers can work hard. However, at the same time they are found to have several drawbacks: [...] because they have a job, they give up family duties.* (關於婦女職業的談話, 1932.11.14 第12版 第21411期)

Women's domestic roles represented in *Shen Bao* in the Republican era are still deeply rooted in the patriarchal system. Taking care of family members and household chores is considered the born duty of women. Discussing the whole Republican era, the blazing debate has always been whether women should go to work. Whether man should share some household responsibilities has never even been mentioned. The reason and logic behind this is that the whole of society believes household chores are the born duty of women, and it has nothing to do with a man. According to the views conveyed in the newspapers, since a woman's profession is the prerequisite and pivot of the Women's Movement, and the household chores are women's born duty, it follows that how to balance profession and family duty, and how to have it all is the new goal. There are also various interpretations of the traditional role of "good wives and mothers" intending to legitimise the oppression of women in the domestic sphere.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Throughout the Republican era, the articles in *Shen Bao* believe that, on the one hand, women's participation in social improvement is the prerequisite to any women's emancipation movement. On the other hand, the household chores are believed to be women's born duty, so that would establish the idea that women should "have it all". This contravenes the independent spirit that women's independence emphasised. Such an arrangement seems to have shown the

women's way to economical self-sustainability; however, it has actually caused a double burden for women because women have to take on financial responsibility to be independent in addition to being a good wife and mother, without their men sharing the burden of chores. This is simply emphasising equal obligation between men and women, but not equal rights. In addition, the answer to "not depend on men" is not to go out and work in the factory. As discussed in Chapter 5, women are dependent on the need for cheap female labour in capitalism, not ridding themselves of the fate of being enslaved. Because of the patriarchal system and the reality that men possess the production materials, the ethical meaning of gender equality promoted in the Republican era cannot be separated from the embarrassment of man's superiority and women's inferiority.

Women's representations in *Shen Bao* are tightly connected with politics. This is because women's participation in politics were highly promoted in the Republican era. Gender is a founding category of modern politics and women's suffrage has shaped the modern politics of nation building, democracy and subjectivity. Suffragists defined the nature of the Republic and defended women's place in it by challenging the political dominance of men and subverting the gender hierarchy (Ma 2007, p. 198). In addition, the promoted representation of "New woman" and the condemned representation of "modern woman / girl" reflect man's anxiety. Much of this criticism had to associate with the fact that the new independent women were no longer bound to the home but free to circulate in public spaces- no longer in man's control.

In the late Qing Era, male reformers put forth the concept of modern women's roles to save the nation (see Chapter 5). While in the Republican era, the new Women's Emancipation Movement focuses on women's "self-reliance, self-awareness and self-strength". Women began to explore an equal relationship with men. The deconstruction of traditional women's roles has entered a mature stage, unlike the unpractical ideas in the late Qing Era. Women began to realise that gender equality does not mean sameness. Women themselves, striving for women's emancipation is the highlight of the Republican era. The social structure in China remained unchanged despite the founding of the Republic. Only women in the cities with a modern education were active in the movement; most Chinese women in the rural areas lacked education and were unable to challenge the existing gender hierarchy. With the Chinese Communist Party coming into power in 1949, Chinese women were to face the extreme politicalised ideologies. Chapter 7 examines women's representation and roles in the socialist era (1950-1978) with further diachronic discussions across the four eras in Chapter 9.

## Chapter 7 Socialist Era (1950–1978)

### Masculinised Women as Revolutionary Heroines

Mao Zedong proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 marked the beginning of the socialist era. Maoist ideology was much influenced by the work of Karl Marx, especially the concept of class and the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of “putting politics in command”. The overall society was dominated by the highly oppressive political discourse, consequently, women's discourse in this era is greatly affected by the political discourse. The Communist Party's official line since the founding of PRC has been actively pro equality for women, particularly in the economic and political arenas (Croll, 1983). This chapter explores how Maoist ideology is embedded in women's representation in the socialist era (1949-1978). In addition, public and domestic roles of women as a reflection of socialist demand are examined.

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section, **The Discourse of Gender Annihilation**, tackles Corpus 3 (Socialist era) data as a whole, using the word sketch function of the Sketch Engine software to examine the most common patterns of representation, in particular, examining the search terms *women* and *female gender*. Word Sketch function provides a plethora of grammatical and collocational information on the search terms. Comparative analysis of word sketch results between *women* and *female gender* will be conducted to reveal the discourse reconstruction strategies.

The second section is **The Politicisation of Women Discourse**. Focusing on the high frequency words and keywords generated by the software, words that are statistically more frequent can be identified. Such words can then be grouped together and examined in more detail to reveal unique strategies.

Section three, **Social Role Analysis: Super-Energised Socialist Workers**, examines a set of public representation related high frequency words and keywords generated in section two, and identifies women's public roles represented by *People's Daily*. Relating to women's social

roles and the nature of the socialist Women's Liberation Movement, this section presents women's public images represented by *People's Daily*.

Section four, **Domestic Role Analysis: Holding Up the Heavier Half of Sky**, examines a set of domestic representation related high frequency words and key words generated in section two, and identifies women's domestic roles.

Section five, **Conclusion**, summarises the main findings, and attempts to explain the findings by linking them to the social and political context.

### 7.1 Word Sketch Analysis: The Discourse of Gender Annihilation

As illustrated in Table 3.1 on page 45, Corpus 3, the socialist era, consists of 40 articles and 152569 characters, generated and collected using the two sets of search terms “women 妇女” and “female gender 女性” (see Chapter 3). Compared with other historical eras, there are a significantly smaller number of articles generated. During the socialist era, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) advanced a series of slogans pertinent to gender equality: for example, the famous one by Mao Zedong (1893 – 1976, also known as Chairman Mao, the founder of the PRC) in 1965 that “Time has changed. Men and women are equal. Women can do what men do”, “Women hold up half the sky”, and so forth. Women were actively inducted into the public labour force and were immersed into the highly politicised nature of life (Evans, 1997). Political ideology dominated the public discourse; other voices that were not aligned with the CCP were either marginalised or completely eliminated (Armstrong, 2020). The drive toward gender equality was implemented to the extreme. Femininity or any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006). State propaganda featured the strong, brave, and technically-skilled “iron women”; showing interest in love or sex was treated either as “shameful expressions of a warped mind” or as “evidence of bourgeois individualism and are thus detrimental to the collective welfare” (Evans, 1997). Yang called this phenomenon “gender annihilation”(Yang, 1999). I argue that the above is the main reason that only forty articles pertinent to women and female gender were generated.

Figure 7.1 below gives information on which year these forty articles were from. There is a noticeable decline during the Cultural Revolution years (1966-1976) and increase toward the end of the socialist era. In the pre-Cultural Revolution years, collectivism and individualism worked together to spur changes in women’s roles (Croll, 1978). During the Cultural Revolution years, gender equality was implemented to the extreme, and female gender had been annihilated from the newspapers, which caused the decline of the number of articles.

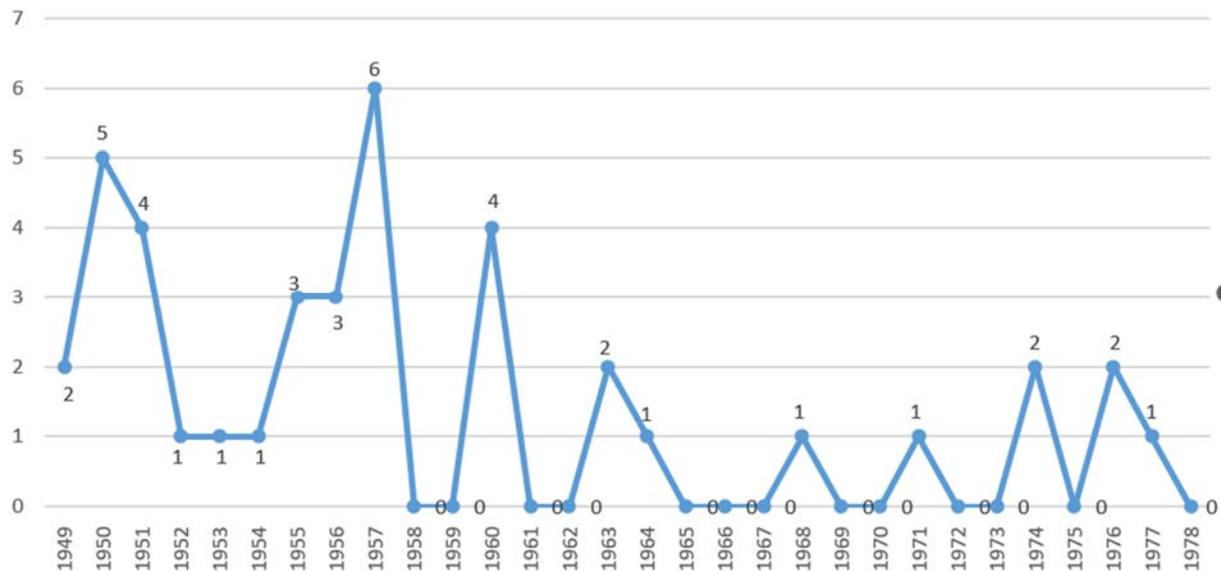


Figure 7.1 Number of Articles in Corpus 3

Word sketch function not only identifies and collocates but also specifies the grammatical relationship between them. When a corpus is installed in Sketch Engine, each word is assigned a grammatical ‘tag’, such as ‘proper noun’, ‘adjective’, ‘base form of verb’, ‘-s form of verb’, and so forth. As a result, when Sketch Engine identifies collocates, it also takes into account the positions of the collocates in relation to each other, and the grammatical tags of each collocate, in order to identify grammatical relationships. The collocates of a word within particular grammatical structures are thus grouped together, and this is referred to as a word sketch (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b).

### 7.1.1 Word Sketch of “Women”: The Revolutionary Women

Figure 7.2 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of the word “women” (妇女 fù nǚ) in Corpus 3, and Table 7.1 is the translation of this screenshot. It can be seen that Sketch Engine has grouped the collocates of *women* into nine grammatical patterns, or frames. The first group

shows words that occur in the frame {Women and/or x}. Additionally, this frame includes cases when *women* appears at the end {x and/or Women}. This pattern is useful in telling us about the other sorts of groups or people who tend to be associated with women. The most frequent group is the word children (儿童), which occurs twenty-one times in this frame, bearing in mind that there are only forty articles generated in this corpus. CCP had made a lot of effort to promote “gender equality”, and the status of women and children were much improved since 1949. As one half of the population, women were given every opportunity to “stand up”. The new government was explicitly committed to improving the position of women in society as it adopted a number of policies and laws to redefine the roles of women and place them in a position of equal status with men in both the public and domestic sphere (Croll, 1983). “Women hold up half the sky” represents the huge achievement in socialist China that women had broken through tradition, and entered the political and social sphere to participate in the socialist construction and revolution. In particular, the Marriage Law, implemented in May 1950, was designed to outlaw most of the extreme forms of gendered abuse of women and legally reduced the power of men in the family and kin groups and to form a new basis for gender relations in the family (ACWF, 2003). As stated by Evans, the Law was praised as “the first indispensable step toward dismantling the system of oppressive patriarchal authority” (Evans 1995, p. 361). The other most frequent group include {women and/or [*people, men, etc.*]}. Rather than let *women* be represented by or included in *people*, the emphasis of these articles on women once again, indicated that CCP regarded women of great importance.

The frame in the second column shows women as noun modifier or women modified by a noun modifier, {[noun modifier] + women}. The modifiers are locations, for example, {[ Soviet, North Korean, rural area, etc.] + women}, or the status and class, for example {[ e.g., working class] + women}. These modifiers show significant political influence on women, which will be further discussed in section 2 of this chapter, The Politicisation of Women Discourse.

The fourth column comprises the nouns that *women* modifies, {women + [noun modifier]}. The most frequent word is *crowd*. As socialist China is an era of collectivism, women have been grouped together. The two collocates from column nine {[A modifier] + women} also show the collectivised women, {[*more and more* 越来越, *vast group of* 广大] + women}. Other common collocates in the fourth column include {women + [representative, liberation, delegation, work, union, movement, convention, rights]}, which also show the influence of

political ideology of the CCP. The sixth and eighth columns show women used as possession and possessor forms, which contained collocates that refer to locations, for example, {[ Soviet, North Korean, rural area, etc.] + women}, or issues of women, for examples {women's + [status, liberation, mission, unity, work, strength, struggle, discrimination, system]}.

The third column {women + [verb]} is where the term women is the subject (or doer) of the verb; and the fifth and the seventh columns give the opposite pattern: cases where women is the object (or indirect object) of the verb – or, rather, when someone else carries the process on women. As the verbs here include motivate, engage, organise, emancipate, help, reject, participate, gain, hold position, should, encourage, utilise, enhance, improve. These verbs indicate that women need to be guided; women's rights need to be given. It is possible to take this kind of analysis a stage further, particularly when a set of related collocates, examined in context, seems to suggest a particularly passive stance and thus reveals a discourse (or way of representing an aspect of the world). These collocates are categorised below, shown by Table 7.2, to analyse the topics relating to women.

and/or	N_Modifier	Subject_of	Modifies	Object_of	Possession	Indirect-Object_of	Possessor	A_Modifier	Measure
儿童 妇女和儿童的	劳动 劳动妇女	参加 妇女参加	群众 妇女群众的	使 使妇女	地位 妇女的地位	使 使妇女	阶级 剥削阶级的妇女	多 越来越多的妇女	名 名妇女
人民 妇女和人民	苏联 苏联妇女代表团领导人和	解放 妇女解放的	代表 基层妇女代表会议	发动 发动妇女参加	解放 妇女的解放	发动 积极发动妇女参加农业合作化	亚洲 我们亚洲的妇女	广大 广大的手工业妇女	部 部苏联妇女
男子 妇女和男子	中国 中国妇女	获得 妇女获得	解放 妇女解放运动	组织 组织妇女	任务 妇女的任务, 是	组织 组织妇女	苏联 苏联的妇女和		位 位妇女被选为
妇女 妇女与亚洲妇女	世界 世界妇女大会	占 中, 妇女占	代表团 苏联妇女代表团领导人和国际	发挥 发挥妇女的力量	团结 妇女的团结和	参加 参加领导地位的妇女	国家 国家的妇女		个 一个妇女
代表 代表, 一千七百三十八位妇女	我国 我国妇女	担任 妇女担任	工作 妇女工作的	解放 要彻底解放妇女	劳动 逐步减轻妇女的家务劳动				
家属 职工家属和家属劳动妇女	国 全国妇女	要 妇女要	联合会 全国民主妇女联合会	加强 加强妇女	力量 发挥妇女的力量				
民族 亚洲被压迫民族与被压迫妇女解放	民主 国际民主妇女联合会	争取 妇女争取	运动 妇女运动的	歧视 歧视妇女的	斗争 亚洲妇女的斗争				
主席 政书感谢毛主席和中国妇女	朝鲜 朝鲜妇女	得到 妇女得到	大会 莫斯科世界妇女大会	实现 实现妇女的彻底解放	歧视 对妇女的歧视				
	基层 基层妇女代表会议的	能够 我国妇女所以能够为祖国做出	权利 保卫妇女权利	排斥 排斥妇女	制度 妇女的制度				
	亚洲 亚洲妇女为民族独立	受 妇女受压迫的	儿童 妇女儿童	帮助 和帮助妇女					
	农村 广大农村妇女	走上 妇女走上了	问题 妇女问题	要 要把越来越多的妇女					
	全世界 全世界妇女的	从争 妇女从事	生活 苏联妇女生活与工作图片	提高 提高了妇女的					

Figure 7.2 Word Sketch of “Women”

Table 7.1 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Women”

And/or	N-modifier	Subject of	Modifiers	Object-of	possession	Indirect object of	possessor	A modifier
Children	working	Participate	crowd	Make	Status	Make	Class	More and more
People	Soviet	Emanipate	Representative	Encourage	Liberation	Engage	Asia	vast group of
Men	China	Gain	Liberation	Organise	Mission	Organise	Soviet Union	
Women	world	are	Delegation	Utilize	Unity	participate	country	
Representative	Our country	Hold position	Work	Liberate	Work			
family	Other country	Will	Union	Strengthen	Strength			
Nation	democracy	Fight for	Movement	Discriminate	Struggle			
Chairman Mao	North Korea	Gain	Convention	accomplish	Discrimination			
	Grass root level	Can	Rights	exclude	system			
	Asia	are		help				

Below, Table 7.2 summarises some of the key points that emerged from these word sketches. As shown in the table, the word sketch of *women* revealed a number of frames that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. When *women* is tagged as a noun, its adjectival and noun modifiers tended to be grouped in the categories shown in the Table. As already noted, one way that women are characterised is in terms of the extent of their status and class, with the main focus on working-class women. Verbs in the word sketch indicate that women are passive, waiting to be rescued, waiting to be given. We can see most of these words

are politics and ideology related words. During the socialist era, women were actively inducted into the public labour force and were immersed into the highly politicised nature of life. These highly oppressive political regulations and the ideology dominated the public discourse.

Table 7.2 Categories of Word Sketch Collocates for “Women”

Category	Collocates
location	China, Asia, Soviet Union, North Korea, world, rural area
Status/class	working class, representatives
organisation	Union,
issue	Problems, life, system, struggle, strength, discrimination, reject

### 7.1.2 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”: Prone to Be Fooled

Figure 7.3 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of *female gender* in the Corpus 3. Compared with the word sketch generated using the other search term *women*, *female gender* only appears 55 times in Corpus 3, while *women* appears 1766 times – over 32 times more than *female gender*. This is another proof of the de-gendering of women revealed by the data. Also, there are more descriptions on how female gender looks, for example {female gender + [beauty, face]} and {[gentle, outstanding, great] + female gender}. Moreover, the most noticeable shift from the word sketch of *women* is that female gender is represented as being easily fooled. Below, Table 7.3 is the translation of the Figure 7.3. which summarises some of the key points that emerged from these collocations. As previously discussed, the word sketch of *women* revealed a number of frames that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. When *women* is tagged as a noun, its adjectival and noun modifiers tended to be grouped in the categories shown in the Table. As already noted, one way that women are characterised is in terms of the extent of their status and class, the main focus being on working-class women. Verbs in the word sketch indicate that women are passive, waiting to be rescued, waiting to be given (help, reject, organise...). Location, organisations, issues are also mentioned.

In Table 7.3, the first group shows {female gender and/or x} and {x and/or female gender}. Sketch Engine generates {[male gender, mother, organization, people] and female gender}.

The second column {female gender + [verb]}, *female gender* is the subject of the verb. The most common collocation is {female gender + [are fooled]}. Column three shows cases where *female gender* is the object of the verb. These verbs include {[abuse, molest, swindle, despise, discuss, rebut, prohibit] + female gender}. Needless to say, all these verbs indicate *female gender* is stupid, and easily fooled. The fourth column displays the nouns that modify female gender {[N-modifier] + female gender}. This column mainly contains collocates that referred to women in China, {[China, our country] + female gender}. The fifth column is where *female gender* is in the possessive form, {female gender's + [noun]}. Most frequent collocations are {female gender + [shame, wrong opinion, status]}. The sixth column is where female gender is modified by adjectives, {[gentle, outstanding, new, great] + female gender}.

and/or	Subject_of	Object_of	N_Modifier	Possession	A_Modifier
温柔 温柔、女性	上当 女性上当	蹂躏 玩弄和蹂躏女性	诈骗 诈骗女性	之美 女性的道德之美	温柔 温柔的女性
男性 男性，不用女性	入园 女性均可自由入园	玩弄 一贯玩弄女性的	轻视 轻视女性	温柔 女性的温柔	优秀 优秀的女性
母 女性和母	需要 女性从来不需要	出现 出现了新的女性	民主 南北朝鲜民主女性同盟联合中央	脸 女性的脸	新 新的女性
团体 女性，有些机关团体	可 女性均可	不愧为 不愧为新中国的女性	歧视 歧视女性	恶棍 女性的恶棍	伟大 伟大的女性
人 女性，许多人	为 女性从来不需要为	重行 女性重行	我国 我国女性	名字 女性的名字	
	受 女性获得受	凡属 凡属女性	中国 中国女性	错误观点 女性的错误观点	
	获得 女性获得	丢 丢女性		地位 女性的社会地位	
		大谈 大谈女性			
		驳斥 驳斥野蛮的封建主义性质的轻视女性			
		切 切女性			
		禁止 禁止歧视女性			
		失去 失去她们温柔的女性			

Figure 7.3 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Table 7.3 Translation of Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

And/or	Subject of	Object-of	N-modifier	possession	Modifier
Male gender	Be fooled	abuse	democracy	(inner) beauty	gentle
mother	entre	molest	our country	gentle	outstanding
organization	need	swindle	China	shame	new
people	can	despise		name	great
	receive	emerge		wrong opinion	
	gain	be		status	
	lose	discuss			
		debate			
		prohibit			
		discriminate			

Table 7.4 Categories of Word Sketch Collocates for “Female Gender”

Category	Collocates
location	China
traits	Inner beauty, gentleness
verbs	abuse, molest, swindle, despise, discuss, rebut, prohibit,
issue	Wrong opinion, status
Crime	Be fooled, swindle, molest, despise, abuse

Table 7.4 summarises some of the key points that emerged from looking at these word sketches. As shown in Table 7.4, compared to the word sketches of *women*, a larger number of collocates of *female gender* relate directly to issues of crime: {[abuse, molest, swindle] + female gender}.



## 7.2 Keywords and High-Frequency Words: Politicisation of Women Discourse

High-frequency words are expected to reflect the subject matter of the corpus articles. Having eliminated the general lexical verbs (e.g., come, say, take), lexical markers of modality (e.g., think, want, need), general adjectives (e.g., good, little, new), and also function words, these are the top 10 high-frequency words list: 人民 people, 劳动labour, 主义 -ism, 斗争struggle, 中国China, 工作work, 社会主义socialism, 苏联 Soviet Union, 国家 nation/country, 解放liberation. Due to the neutral representations of nouns and verbs in Chinese language grammar, the above nouns comprise both verb and noun forms. This preliminary analysis of the top 10 high-frequency words suggests that many of the high-frequency words in the corpus articles directly or indirectly refer to issues of politics or the socialist ideology, for examples: socialism, Soviet Union, liberation and so forth. In addition, women as a labour force are encouraged to work for the country in order to achieve socialism.

Keyword analysis reveals the different contexts that women are written about (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013b) and it is a fairly subjective process. The preliminary analysis of the top 50 keywords leaves me with two impressions: Firstly, the top 50 keywords suggest many articles directly or indirectly refer to political issues, for example, rightist, reactionaries, and so forth. Figure 7.5 is the print screen of the keywords generated, and Table 7.5 is the translation of Figure 7.5. Secondly, these keywords are highly ideological. For example: -ism, -ist, socialism, Bourgeois, proletariat and so forth. Table 7.6 shows the categories of keywords. When creating categorisations and assigning words to them, concordances are checked to analyse the context. In the socialist era, women are immersed into the highly politicised and ideological nature of life.

Word	Word	Word	Word	Word
1 资产阶级 ...	11 男尊女卑 ...	21 三从四德 ...	31 反帝 ...	41 合作化 ...
2 主义 ...	12 孔孟之道 ...	22 决不 ...	32 成千成万 ...	42 半边天 ...
3 无产阶级 ...	13 同工 ...	23 每个 ...	33 半殖民地 ...	43 婚姻法 ...
4 全世界 ...	14 同酬 ...	24 右派分子 ...	34 苏联 ...	44 夫权 ...
5 主义者 ...	15 勤俭 ...	25 还要 ...	35 反华 ...	45 奴役 ...
6 妇女们 ...	16 女工 ...	26 姊妹们 ...	36 蔡畅 ...	46 全社 ...
7 各个 ...	17 压迫 ...	27 反动 ...	37 马来亚 ...	47 各方面 ...
8 妇女 ...	18 帝国 ...	28 列宁 ...	38 走狗 ...	48 阿尔巴尼亚 ...
9 持家 ...	19 裁军 ...	29 副业 ...	39 执行局 ...	49 托儿所 ...
10 家务 ...	20 社会主 ...	30 各地 ...	40 剥削 ...	50 她们 ...

Rows per page: 50 1-50 of 1,000 1 / 20

Figure 7.5 Screenshot of Keywords List

Table 7.5 Translation of the Keyword List

<b>bourgeois</b>	<b>Supremacy of men over women</b>	<b>Three Obediences and Four Virtues</b>	<b>anti-imperialism</b>	<b>cooperation</b>
-ism (mostly imperialism, nationalism)	Confucianism	never	millions of	half of the sky
proletariat	equal work opportunity	every	semi-colonial	marriage law
Whole world	equal pay	rightist	USSR	husband's marital power
-ist (mostly imperialist, Marxist)	frugally	more than	Anti-China	enslave
women	women worker	sisters	Cai Chang	cooperative
each	oppression	reactionaries	Malaysia	every aspect
woman	empire	Lenin	Running dogs	Albania
homemaking	disarmament	secondary occupation	Executive Directorate	childcare
housework	socialism	all over the places	Exploit(ion)	they(female)

Table 7.6 Categories of High-Frequency Words and Keywords

Category	Collocates
location	China, Soviet Union, Albania, world, Malaysia,
women	women worker, sisters, half of the sky, women, they(female)
organisation	Empire, Executive Directorate
issue	Homemaking, housework, Supremacy of men over women, equal work opportunities, equal pay, secondary occupation, oppression, exploitation, enslave, childcare, thrift,
ideology	-ism, -ist, socialism, Bourgeois, proletariat, Confucianism, semi-colonial, anti-imperialism, anti-China, running dogs,
Name	Lenin, Cai Chang,
Politics	rightist, reactionaries, cooperative, cooperation, disarmament, marriage law

The location, organisation, ideology and politics categories of Table 7.6 show significant political influence. The issue category mainly emphasises women as fulfilling duties both in the public and domestic spheres. The situation of women being exploited and enslaved is also strengthened. Keywords and high-frequency words are now to be divided into two categories: public role related and family role related, which will be discussed respectively in the next two sections.

### 7.3 Social Role Analysis: Super-Energised Socialist Workers

In the socialist era, the government of China turned its attention to the economic foundations of the oppression and exploitation of women and linked their struggle to class struggle (Croll, 1978). It was supposed that entry into the paid labour force would aid women in acquiring confidence, power and authority within both the domestic and public spheres. Women were mobilised to enter the public workplace, and newspaper articles were utilised to promote women's work roles. The famous slogan of "*Women Holding Up Half the Sky*" implied that women were equal to men in both their abilities and responsibility to follow the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in advancing the socialist revolution. In order to discuss women's public roles, the following collocations generated in sections one and two are examined in detail: women worker, half the sky, secondary occupation. This section comprises three parts to illustrate women's social roles described in *People's Daily: Women as Great Human*

*Labour Force, Only You- China Communist Party, and Masculinity Appeared Iron Girls.* The following example from *People's Daily* is one of the most common representations at the time:

*Lenin taught us to value the importance of women's labour and exploit the power of women's labour. Enthusiastically supporting the fight of working women's liberation, which is a paramount part of the proletariat revolution, Lenin said: "The proletariat cannot be completely emancipated if women are not liberated completely." (列宁论社会主义建设和妇女解放——为纪念列宁八十五周年诞辰而作, 蔡畅, 1955.04.15)*

### 7.3.1 *Women as Great Human Labour Force*

In the socialist era under the mobilisation of the CCP, women actively participated in the national economic construction and political revolution, equal with men or even competing with men, and the Women's Liberation Movement was integrated into the national movement and revolution. It was the organisation of social production and collective living on a grand scale that created the "unprecedented conditions favourable to the emancipation of women" and gave the women's movement an "extraordinary momentum" (Croll, 1978). "According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labour Force, during 1957–1960, women workers of the state-owned labour system increased from 3.286 million to 10.087 million- a stunning 206.7% ( Ministry of Labour Force, 1987 cited in Xu, 2015, p. 99)". Representing one half of the population, women were consequently seen as "great human resources" to "be developed and utilised" so as to speed up the national development. The Women's Liberation Movement had achieved huge success, however, at the same time, women were heavily exploited as a national labour resource (Judd, 2002; Yao, 1983; Wang, 1997). The following examples emphasised the importance of women's work identity evidenced in the articles:

*"Women are indispensable labour force."*

*"Chinese women are great human resources, and must be developed and utilised for the socialist nation's modernisation & construction." (By Mao in 1958, cited in many articles in People's Daily)*

*“The power of Chinese women is vast and endless, holding the half sky of the whole great cause.” Mao. (庆功表模迎“三八”--蔡畅号召人人作红、勤、巧、俭的先进妇女, 积极参加比、学、赶、帮的劳动竞赛, 1960.03.06)*

*“Half the Sky” campaign dates back to the 1960s, during which “Iron Girl” was promoted as the typical women’s image summarising the socialist ideological position concerning Chinese women’s work identity. Women were portrayed as the same as men by participating in labour, reflecting the government effort to promote an awareness of the potential economic and social contributions of women (Croll, 2013).*

*However, we must see that the labour potential hidden in the masses of women is still far from being fully utilised. Take rural areas as an example, there are more than 200 million working women, which is 120 million potentials for labour. This is a huge labour force! If we calculate that, every woman in the labour force works 120 days per year, there will be 14.4 billion working days in a year! (充分发挥妇女在社会主义建设中的伟大作用, 1956.03.08)*

As pointed out earlier in Chapter 4, in implementing the new policies and mobilising ideological class struggle after 1949, the government frequently referred to the necessity for women’s support and involvement, and there were many references to the fact that one major objective of the communist revolution was to mobilise the entire population, both men and women, in the economic construction of the nation (Yao, 1983).

The success of the Women’s Liberation Movement is inseparable from the victory of the class struggle movement. Only with the victory of the proletariat class can women be truly liberated. Looking back at the history of the Women’s Liberation Movement led by our Party (CCP), it is the history of the class struggle of the proletariat class together with the vast group of women against the bourgeoisie and all exploiting classes under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. The women’s organisations led by our Communist Party were established in the course of class struggle, and are the party’s tools to carry out class struggle and women’s liberation. (妇女工作必须坚持以阶级斗争为纲, 1976.03.08)

As well as the ideological class struggle, labour and work were also the central elements of the Women’s Liberation Movement in the socialist era. Marxism theories emphasise that only by earning an income through work, can women become independent from men, to break free

from family-based patriarchal shackle. Moreover, only under the socialist system, when duties of housework and child-rearing are made public responsibilities by the state, can women truly achieve liberation (Williams, 1977). Many articles in *People's Daily* emphasised women's performance in the work place and their contribution to the development of socialism.

*Women are participating/working in education, medical care, health, cooperatives, and government. Therefore, regardless of the women in school, at work, or at home, regardless of urban or rural women, they are participating in socialist construction and socialist transformation in one way or another. The majority of women are women who work and have made outstanding contributions to the construction of the motherland for many years, and many outstanding models have emerged. (列宁论社会主义建设和妇女解放——为纪念列宁八十五周年诞辰而作, 蔡畅, 1955.04.15)*

In addition, women's representation has been glorified. According to Evans (1995, 2002), women are glorious and revolutionary - as in the term revolutionary women 革命妇女 adopted by the CCP's official discourse. Articles that encourage women to divorce themselves from the traditional confines of the home, and instead get jobs so that they can be economically independent and contribute to the greater cause and build the socialist new China. Women were depicted as strong leaders, martyrs and model workers, serving alongside men, even leading men, as they marched together into a bright red future. Almost overnight, it seemed, the status of Chinese women had risen from cipher to salience, a giant step toward the creation of a brave new world.

*The glorious facts of women show that they are a great force loyal to the motherland, loyal to the people, and loyal to the general roadmap (to socialism). (妇女快马再加鞭 顶着跃进半边天 胡耀邦在首都“三八”广播大会上的讲话, 1960.03.06)*

### 7.3.2 Only You- China Communist Party

Articles of *People's Daily* in the socialist era are heavily invested with the national ideology of political agendas emphasising women's work identity. As Wodak points out, there are many situations where other identities override gender identities (Wodak, 2008). The construction of women's roles in China, especially their social role, is situated within the construction of the

discourse of nationhood, itself resulting from China's unique contemporary historical process. In the socialist era, to participate in national production was falsely equated with women's own liberation (Lei, 2008). It was the CCP who guided the movement for women's liberation and participation such as in education and work. As a result, the relationship between the individual and the nation was absolutely nation-oriented, with characteristics of strong patriotism and collectivism. As a consequence, the print media presentation of women's roles continues to integrate women's development into the overall national construction, and strengthens again and again that "*Only Communism can guarantee the complete emancipation of women.* (列宁论社会主义建设和妇女解放——为纪念列宁八十五周年诞辰而作, 1955.04.15)". Seen as the "mouthpiece" of the CCP, *People's Daily* is supposed to carry out its function of promoting the policies of the Party and advocating nationalism concerning model identity construction for mass readers.

*True gender equality can only be achieved during the socialist transformation of the whole society. (妇女的彻底解放是社会主义历史阶段一项重要任务——批判《改良女儿经》，毛泽东, 1974.11.14)*

*Only when Chinese women take the path of socialism, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, can they unite to gain the power to control their own destiny; women's long suppressed ingenuity of intelligence can be fully exerted; both their social and domestic status can be changed hugely. The experience from history fully proves: only the Communist Party of China is the core of the leader. (章蕴同志在中国妇女第三次全国代表大会上的报告, 1957.09.10)*

Many articles show Chinese women's special affection towards the CCP and its leaders. The link between women's liberation and the CCP is firstly and directly established through the re-emerged expressions of "*Only by taking the road of socialism under the leadership of the Communist Party of China can we unite and become a force that can control our own destiny.*(勤俭建国勤俭持家为建设社会主义而奋斗, 1957.09.10)" Secondly, the appeal of historical evidence "history of experience proves ..." and the conditional clauses "only by...can..." serves to further highlight the significance of the link – the Party's guidance is important for the Women's Liberation Movement and women's contribution is indispensable to the national construction. Thirdly, the terms such as "path, destiny, ingenuity" imply that the

governmental expectation on women is being internalised as a responsibility or affection towards the nation.

Further to the special affection of women to the nation, some scholars have offered the explanation that because of the unique political system in China, women's liberation and rights do not arise from any bottom-up women's movement, but rather from radical social revolution and top-down legal and administrative action, as if there were some "favour" granted to women by a grateful socialist nation (Armstrong, 2020; Hershatter, 2004; Hershatter & Zheng, 2008). Social role analysis reveals such patterns or trends as well as some semantic preferences around the key terms such as people 人民, nation 国家, Party 党, motherland 祖国. Although at times there are no clear-cut patterns, it still appears that there are some interesting concordance suggestions contributing to this construction that only CCP can save China and Chinese women, underpinned by socialist national ideologies. For instance, in some examples, women were asked to be in the service of the state at the expense of self-interests, or women should be thankful to Chairman Mao and the Party. Other examples with this trend include:

*"Now that the people's government has saved us, we should study hard, and be a new woman in our new society. We need to thank the people's government and wish Chairman Mao a long life!" (邓颖超在亚洲妇代会议上的报告, 1949.12.12)*

*"Only a socialist system can completely liberate women, and entitle women to happiness and satisfaction." (邓颖超在亚洲妇代会议上的报告, 1949.12.12)*

Only the victory of socialist construction and socialist transformation; the elimination of private ownership; the elimination of the exploitation of the social system, can finally eliminate the fundamental conditions for placing women in an unequal position. Only the victory of socialism construction can gradually reduce women's domestic duties and create more favorable conditions for women to participate in state management, economic, cultural and other construction careers. (列宁论社会主义建设和妇女解放——为纪念列宁八十五周年诞辰而作蔡畅, 1955.04.15)

### 7.3.3 *Masculine Appeared Iron Girls*

Masculinity was expressed by the use of such adjectives as "strong," "mighty," and "tiger-like" to describe women workers. These articles highlighted women as being "just like men", and as

“iron women”. During the Cultural Revolution years (1966-1976), men and women were “comrades”, not lovers. Women were also depicted as capable managers and administrators, positions that used to be the exclusive purview of men. Women’s capability in domains traditionally populated by men was also emphasised. Plain looking, casually dressed working class heroines engaged in agricultural and industrial production were highly praised. The findings of this research echoes with other scholars’ findings that socialist China was an era that received much attention (e.g.: Croll, 1983; Evans, 1997; Wang, 1997).

*There is a girl called Erjie. Dark Skin. The excessive sweat has made her skin darker and shinier. (英勇战斗着的越南妇女1951.03.07)*

*How to understand “equal pay for equal work” for men and women? The correct understanding should be: women participate in the social productions; no matter what work they do, it should be the same as men. (怎样正确理解男女“同工同酬”，1956.09.09)*

#### **7.4 Domestic Role Analysis: Holding Up the Heavier Half of Sky**

In order to examine women’s domestic roles, the following domestic role related keywords are selected: housework, home making, secondary occupation, Marriage Law, childcare. In the socialist era, the discourse on the domestic role of women, was still shown in the traditional family sphere as mothers, dutiful wives, or daughters. Representation in the *People’s Daily* includes portrayals of taking care of children, supporting their husband, looking after extended family members, and fulfilling all aspects of domestic duties. In this way, women are able to contribute to society. On many occasions articles of the *People’s Daily* iterate that “Women have special responsibility because housekeeping should be done mostly by women. (在中国妇女第三次全国代表大会上, 蔡畅, 宋庆龄, 何香凝, 1957.09.10).” Women can and should free their husband from the burdens of household tasks so that husbands can focus on their jobs to advance the state. Such articles also presented women as exemplars or gave advice on how to be successful in fulfilling domestic duties and responsibilities. Other examples include:

*“Women’s work is particularly respectable in terms of housekeeping and parenting.” Chairman Mao said : To achieve making home a diligently and thriftily, we especially*

*need to rely on women. Because women are the housekeepers. (在中国妇女第三次全国代表大会上, 1957.09.10)*

*To achieve making a home diligently and thriftily, is the responsibility of all family members. Although it is mainly housewives' duties, all family members need to work hard. Household women need to do housework. Women who participate in social production should also cover housework. (勤俭建国勤俭持家 妇女责任十分重大, 1957.09.17)*

*As long as women can do a good job in housework, they also fulfil their responsibility to serve the socialist motherland and contribute to the socialism construction. (国家过渡时期城市妇女工作的任务和当前的几项具体工作, 1955.09.07)*

*Taking on the household duties is serving our socialist motherland indirectly. This is so because today's housework is also a type of social labour. It serves the family members who participate in social production and national construction. Housewives also shoulder the obligation to educate their children to become new people who faithfully serve socialism. (国家过渡时期城市妇女工作的任务和当前的几项具体工作, 1955.09.07)*

The Women's Movement Policy of "building the country diligently and frugally, and running the family diligently and frugally" was proposed during the Third Women's National Congress in September 1957. This "Two Diligence" policy was in fact a production-centered policy, which can be considered as the state's reservation or compromise and utilisation towards the traditional patriarchal culture (Croll, 1983; Wang, 1997). "Two Diligence" policy is believed to be a shortcut to socialism based on the country's impoverished situation, and also the way for women to contribute in the socialist construction. It can be seen from this that the policy of "Two Diligence" is actually the country's need for women to be diligent and frugal in the family field (reproduction field) and serve the high accumulation of socialism, not just for personal and family enrichment. The "Two Diligence" policy undoubtedly solidified women's domestic duties: family duty is a special task for women; women should take care of household duties as well as participating in social working. In the articles of *People's Daily*, there is no conflict between the two kinds of labour, but in real life, the conflict exists all the time.

A considerable number of articles criticised women for being satisfied with their role just as housewives. Women were encouraged to dedicate themselves to the construction of the state while looking after family members. Domestic duties should be shared with all family members, especially when women are expected to participate as workers or labourers and share the same rights as men, including the right to earn a living, taking no consideration of personal choices.

*“It is necessary to promote the sharing of household chores between men and women to alleviate women’s heavy burden, so that women can devote more time and effort on the socialist revolution and construction. (妇女的彻底解放是社会主义历史阶段一项重要任务——批判《改良女儿经》，1974.11.14)*

*Hundreds of millions of women have also been actively involved in the torrent of social production, free from the heavy domestic work, profound changes have taken place in their spirit, and countless new people and new things have emerged. (塑造动人的英雄妇女的形象，1960.07.25)*

*If the issue of the proletariat revolutionary awareness has not yet been resolved, she can scorn the necessary housework and give up the responsibility of raising her children for the sake of personal unrestrained debauchery or other personal selfish pursuits or spend a lot of time and thoughts on narrow-minded so-called “family happiness” and self-satisfaction. (怎样看待妇女问题，1964.10.28)*

As previously mentioned, articles that depicted women in a domestic role encouraged them to divorce themselves from the traditional confines of the home, to get jobs so that they were economically independent. The importance of women’s traditional family role was overshadowed and somewhat considerably reduced against the backdrop of the nationwide movement of socialist construction. The traditional definition of the women’s role in the domestic sphere persists, however, in terms of both social expectations and women’s own self-discipline. When importance was placed on women’s productive roles and Chinese women were called on to fulfil their duty by participating in social production for the socialist nation as the first priority in the socialist era, the traditional family role of women was “neglected” to an extent. However, an intrinsic ambivalence is embedded in such a position; whereas women’s work identity and related values are explicitly foregrounded in the metaphorical construction, women’s family identity and its pattern are equivocally backgrounded. According to Lakoff

and Johnson, such selective representation is motivated by intentions, in the sense that “people in power get to impose their metaphors” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 484). This ambivalence is further reflected in the later discussions on family identity and work/family double burden (in later chapters). As pointed out by Evans, a husband’s desire for a “virtuous wife and good mother” who was gentle, considerate and who took care of everything, was widely criticised as an expression of “selfish” desires that were, by definition, incompatible with commitment to the collective needs during the socialist era (Evans, 2002).

*The bourgeois reactionary argument that advocates women returning to the kitchen, and the wrong view that women can only do housework, discriminates against women and looks down on housework, and should be resolutely opposed. We must strive for more women to work in our society. (国家过渡时期城市妇女工作的任务和当前的几项具体工作——一九五五年四月十九日在全国妇联召开的第一次城市妇女工作会议上的报告(摘要), 1955.09.07)*

Recognizing ideology as an expression of group identity and values is important for the understanding of the metaphor use in *Half the Sky*. Through media propaganda extolling glorious “work heroines”, women were “convinced” and “persuaded” that they could and should “hold up half the sky” as men did. The role and identity of women is consequently recontextualised in the socio-political agendas and women’s roles are reconceptualised as “responsibilities” that women “shoulder” for the country.

*No matter it’s the women in the family who do the house work, or all the family members share the housework, family members are completely equal and co-operative, connected tightly by love. This is also the reflection of the superior socialist system on the family lives. (只有十月革命的道路才是妇女解放的道路, 1957.10.30)*

This contradictory description is related to the historical background of the socialist era. As discussed earlier, the socialist era, with CCP following Marx’s theory that the economic foundations of the oppression and exploitation of women linked their struggle to that of the proletariat against the forces of capitalism (Croll, 1978). It was the Party’s fundamental policy to promote women’s liberation and improve women’s status both socially and domestically. In order to improve women’s status domestically, the household work has to be granted respect and importance. Women who are doing household work should be respected, and these

messages are embedded in the first strand of the articles. At the same time in the socialist era, women had been considered as great human resources. The Party had defined and stereotyped women as masculine heroines. Women should be encouraged to join in the socialist construction and contribute to the building of the new China, not being confined by domestic household duties. Consequently, to be able to achieve the socialist goal, women “can and should” do both: work and household duties.

Hence, the articles no longer saw career and family as opposing forces. Women could and should achieve both at the same time and the two are necessary to make women complete. Women who are successful with their careers and can also take good care of their family are praised. In the socialist era, some articles portrayed women models at work, and showed how they could achieve work success and contribute to housekeeping and looking after the family. These articles encouraged women to pursue careers, to serve the state and their families. Those who succeeded both at work and home were admired.

*We should educate and help women to try their best and make sure that they do production and housework both well. (积极发动妇女参加农业合作化运动, 1955.11.05)*

*Women who participate in social production should also cover housekeeping. (勤俭建国勤俭持家为建设社会主义而奋斗在中国妇女第三次全国代表大会上的报告, 1957.09.10)*

Optics Dr. Ligia Ivanovna, a mother of eight, does housework herself. After a whole day’s work, she comes back home and cooks, washes, cleans etc with her daughters. She has created harmony, friendship and vitality for her family. (只有十月革命的道路才是妇女解放的道路, 1957.10.30)

However, some articles advocated the primacy of state over family obligations if women had to choose between these two realms. Women work to serve the state, relegating their personal interests as secondary to those of the state. The articles that displayed this talked about people insisting on going to work despite ill health, and people forsaking their family in favour of the state. During the Cultural Revolution, service to the state was taken to the extreme; women started working without pay and began to eschew personal life; it also intimated the agony of

sending loved ones to war, seen as both an honour and a sacrifice. Working was equated with contributing to nation-building. If one was not fulfilling social duties, one was not contributing to the building of new China.

*Altruistically work for the country's socialism construction, for the harmonious family life, for the happiness of our children and grandchildren! (在中国妇女第三次全国代表大会上的报告, 1957.09.10)*

*When family needs me, I will take all the house hold responsibilities; when our country needs me, I will resolutely shoulder the work our motherland gives me. (国家过渡时期城市妇女工作的任务和当前的几项具体工作, 1955.09.07)*

These contradictory representations on the domestic duties, on the one hand, recognise women's instrumental role; on the other hand, still state clearly that the value of housework is not as much as participating in social production. It is only due to the country's impoverished situation which emphasised that women should undertake double labour. On one side, the results indicate that women were shown in traditional domestic roles as mothers, dutiful wives, or daughters primarily within the domestic sphere including taking care of children, supporting their husbands, and looking after extended family members, fulfilling domestic duties and responsibilities. It suggests that women could/should free their husbands from the burdens of household tasks so they could focus on their jobs to advance the state. In this way, women were contributing to society by showing that household work is of great importance and women who are fulfilling domestic duties and responsibilities should be treated with respect. On the other side, a considerable number of articles criticised women for being satisfied with their role as simple housewives. Women were encouraged to dedicate themselves to the construction of the state while also looking after family members. Domestic duties should be shared with all family members, especially when women were referred to as workers or labourers who shared the same rights as men, including the right to earn a living.

Although women's liberation movements in period 3 had achieved huge success and positioned women as an absolute equal group to men, household duties were still the responsibility of women. The articles in the socialist era no longer saw career and family as opposing forces; women could and should achieve both at the same time and the two were necessary to make a woman a "complete" person. Absolute equality creates inequality. Taking no consideration of

physical differences between genders, the social, cultural and historical background of China's circumstances at the time, had resulted in a double burden for women. This way of thinking is still affecting women to this day, and I will expound on the influence of women's liberation on later eras in Chapters 8 and 9.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Although the Women's Liberation Movement in the socialist era was closely linked with politics propaganda and other national movements discussed earlier in this chapter, and was exploited as a national labour resource, it provided the opportunity of a new feminine identity construction, namely self-awareness. In simple terms, this had built the foundation for later development for women's movements as well as the emergence of the women's studies discipline, especially for urban women. Findings show congruence between the dominant ideology of the time and the values in articles that discussed women and female gender. Given the party's continuing commitment to gender equality and its argument that the basic road to equality is through participation in the workforce (Stivens, Sen, and Robinson, 2002), *People's Daily* discourse is heavily invested with the national ideology of political agendas emphasising women's work identity. The presentation of women and female gender in *People's Daily* in the socialist era from 1949 to 1978 was predominantly carried out in a highly politicalised context, and the female gender was frequently portrayed as weak, beautiful, easily fooled and prone to crime or fraud, while on the other hand, women can hold up half of the sky. The media portrayals of Chinese women were used to promote the Communist Party's gender policies and its hegemonic definitions of women in the socialist era of the country's political and economic development. The values of "status," "equality," and "success" of women in the public sphere have been continuously emphasised to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist system. The functionalist feminist media theory that focuses on how media reflect society's dominant social values and symbolically denigrate women (Zoonen, 1994), and Tuchman's Under-representation theory may not fully apply to a newspaper like *People's Daily* in socialist China, which reflects more of what the Chinese Communist Party and its editorial staff want the world to see in Chinese women. As a publicity tool of the Chinese government, *People's Daily* tends to glorify Chinese women in accordance with the changing role of women in Chinese society. However, this is limited to the presentations of women, rather than the presentation of female gender which is still derogatory, and echoes the Stereotyping

mentioned in Chapter 2, where Krishan, Dighe and Tuchman (Krishnan & Dighe, 1990; Tuchman, 2000) noted that women are portrayed in the media either in terms of traditional domestic roles or in terms of their sexual appeal to men, and women are cast in very traditional and stereotypical roles.

In the socialist era, women were urged to dedicate themselves to the building of a new state, and were admonished to subordinate the welfare of themselves to that of the country. Women as individuals with personal lives vanished. Women were ‘gifted’ the right to shoulder ‘the half sky’ taking no consideration of personal choices. In effect, the grid between individuals and the group, between men and women, between the domestic and the public sphere, were removed under the influence of communist ideology. In the socialist era, the Party defined and stereotyped women as masculinised heroines.

As mentioned earlier, in the socialist era, the government of China turned its attention to the economic foundations of the oppression and exploitation of women and linked their struggle to that of the proletariat against the forces of capitalism (Croll, 1978). It was the Party’s fundamental policy to promote women’s liberation and improve women’s status both publicly and domestically. In order to improve women’s status domestically, the household work had to be granted respect and importance. Women who were doing household work should be respected, and these messages were embedded in the first strand of the articles. At the same time in the socialist era, women had been considered as great human resources. The Party had defined and stereotyped women as masculine heroines. Women were encouraged to join in the socialist construction and contribute to the building of the new China, not being confined by domestic household duties. Consequently, to be able to achieve the socialist goal, women “could and should” do both work and household duties. In the socialist era, the articles no longer saw career and family as opposing forces; women could and should achieve both at the same time and the two were necessary to make a woman a “complete” person. The importance of women’s traditional family role was overshadowed and somewhat considerably reduced against the backdrop of the nationwide movement of socialist construction. The traditional definition of women’s roles in the domestic sphere persists, however, in terms of both social expectations and the women’s own self-discipline. When importance was placed on women’s productive roles and Chinese women were called on to fulfil their duty by participating in social production for the socialist nation as the first priority in the socialist era, the traditional family role of women was “neglected” to an extent. Taking no consideration of physical difference

between genders, the social, cultural and historical background of China's circumstance at the time, had resulted in a double burden for women.

As previously expounded the gender identity endowed is the basis for social division, which can be obtained through differentiation. And this differentiation is a strategy for constructing gender identities in modern society. However, in the socialist era, the Party defined women and stereotyped women as masculinised heroines collectively. The dominant ideology at the time, collectivism and socialism, would not tolerate the differentiation. Although "Women hold up half the sky" represents the huge achievement in socialist China that women had broken through the tradition, and entered the political and social sphere to participate in the socialist construction and revolution these achievements were at the cost of annihilating the "female" gender. What is the impact of these symbolic definitions of femininity in period 3? Does regulating women's roles using a male standard reflect patriarchy? Was the gender equality policy centred on men? Taking social changes and the state's Liberation of Women Policy together, how did "holding up half the sky" influence and breed social cultural changes and women's roles? Absolute equality creates inequality. Conventions/ways of thinking formed in the socialist era still affect women to this day, and influence the Women's Liberation Movement in the later post-socialist era.

## Chapter 8 Post-Socialist Era (1979–2012) The Inferior Labour and the Market Economy

In December 1978, Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) came into power, and China entered the post-socialist era. Deng Xiaoping tried to restore China’s position as a global force through a series of economic reforms that favoured a more liberal way of life. The focus of society shifted from “politics in command” to “economy in command” (Judd, 2002), which consequently changed the political and social culture that women lived in. Chapter 8 explores how the shift to “economy in command” affected women’s representations in the post-socialist era. Both public roles and domestic roles of women as a reflection of post-socialist demand for economic development are examined.

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section, **Word Sketch Analysis: Politicalized Discourse**, examines the corpus 4 data as a whole (the post-socialist era, 1979–2012), specifically the word sketches of the search terms: *women* and *female gender*. The second section, **Keywords and High-Frequency Words: Economy and Development**, focuses on the high-frequency words and keywords generated by the software. Section three, **Social Role Analysis: The Return of Individualism**, examines the set of high-frequency words and keywords relating to social representations of women that were identified in section two, and identifies women’s social roles that were represented by *People’s Daily*. Section four, **Domestic Role Analysis: The Privatization of the Family and the Feminization of Housework**, examines the set of high-frequency words and keywords relating to the domestic representation of women that were identified in section two, and presents women’s domestic roles. Section five, **Conclusion**, summarizes the main findings, explains the findings in the social and political context of the post-socialist era and raises further questions to be discussed later in Chapter 9.

### 8.1 Word Sketch Analysis: Politicalized Discourse

As illustrated in Table 3.1 on page 45, corpus 4 below consists of 517 articles and 696,617 characters, generated and collected using the two sets of search terms “women 妇女” and “female gender 女性” (refer to Chapter 3). Compared with other historical eras, it is the biggest

corpus—containing the greatest number of articles. As previously discussed in Chapter 7, any assertion of a feminine identity was rejected (Wallis, 2006) in the socialist era. State propaganda featured strong, brave, technically-skilled and genderless “iron women”. Showing femininity was treated either as “shamefully illicit or as a manifestation of bourgeois individualism and thus detrimental to the collective welfare” (Evans 1995, p. 358). Under such gender repression in the socialist era, women were deprived the rights of autonomous expression of sexuality derived from an individuated female consciousness. As a rejection of the de-gendered masculinisation representation in the socialist era, gender is back. Compared with socialist notion of women’s independence to contribute, the post-socialist definition highlights the free expression of femininity and individuality (Croll, 1995). Li Xiaojiang, the founder of the Association for Women’s Studies in China in the 1980s, proposed the term *gendered person* to break the de-gendered women’s representations in the socialist era (Li, 1988). Further discussion on the *gendered person* is provided in section three, **Social Role Analysis: The Return of Individualism**.

There has been encouraging development in the women’s movement in China since the economic reforms instigated by Deng Xiaoping. Arguably, the most significant achievement would be the development of programs and academic scholarship in women’s studies. It is mile-stoned by the establish of the Centre for Women’s Studies in China at Zhengzhou University in 1987 (Wang, 1997), which marks the turn from the individual research to the institutional organized collective research within the field (Du, 2000). Without the all-ubiquitous government surveillance in the post-socialist era, the scholars and research institutions in the field of women’s studies have engaged in various researches, which was unprecedented in the history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (Wang, 1997). According to Li Xiaojiang, the founder of the Association of Women’s Studies in China, “the (women’s liberation) movement (in the socialist era) was ultimately more political than academic” (Li and Zhang, 1994, p. 138), and “women’s studies grew out of an attempt by a few liberal women leaders in governmental women’s organizations as well as some intellectuals, both male and female, to reobserve, rethink, and redefine the liberation of Chinese women (p. 140)”. Since the 1980s, women’s studies as a discipline began to gather momentum in China.

Figure 8.1 gives information on which year the 517 articles in corpus 4 are from. There are two noticeable peaks in this figure. The first peak is in 1995. As discussed in Chapter 4, Contextual

Background: Women, History, and Ideology, the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) was held in Beijing in 1995. This conference introduced different gender theories and ideas to China, demonstrated the practices of Western feminist movements, and highlighted the achievements of gender equality in various countries. As a result, unprecedented attention was aroused in Chinese society, especially within academia and among intellectual women, to reflect on and discuss women’s issues. The second peak in the figure is in 2005. In September 2004, the Media and Gender Research Institute was set up in the Communication University of China in Beijing, the capital city of the PRC. One year later, on 22 September 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established a Chair of Media and Gender in the Communication University of China. Following the post-socialist trend of “farewell to revolutions and class struggle”, and with the introduction of Western theories, research projects and institutions in the field of women’s studies began to mushroom in universities. Intellectuals began to play an important role in the women’s movement (Li and John, 2005). This is evidenced by the increase in the number of articles in the *People’s Daily* during the post-socialist era.

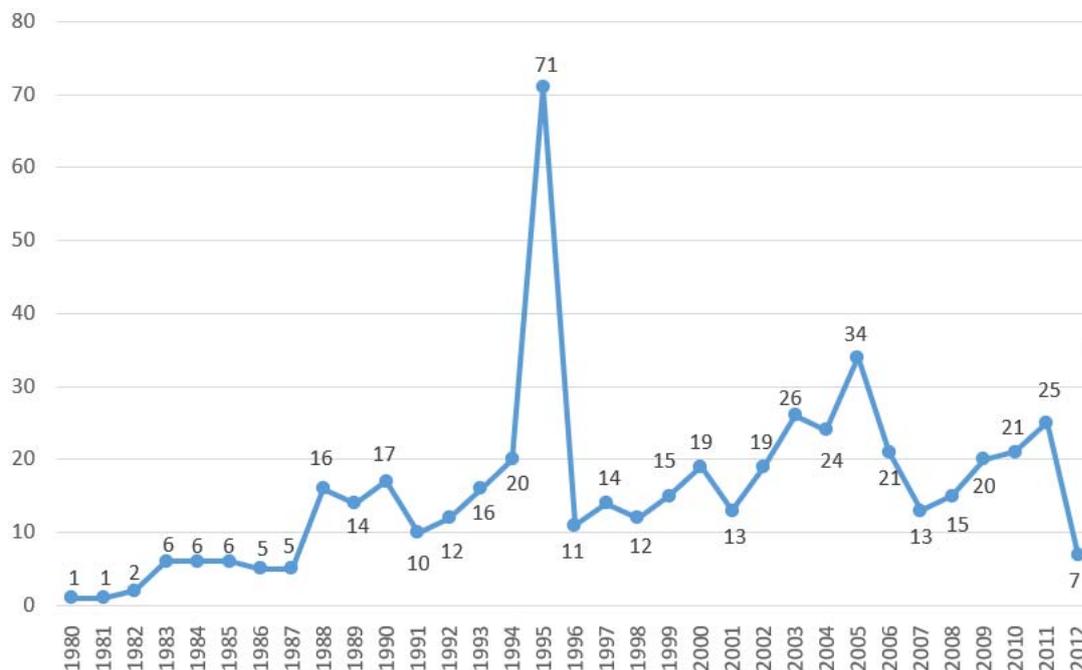


Figure 8.1 Number of Articles in the Post-Socialist Era

This section, **Word Sketch Analysis: Politicalized Discourse**, considers the larger patterns of the women’s representations across the whole of corpus 4 using the data generated from the

Word Sketch function. The section comprises two parts: the Word Sketch of *women* and the Word Sketch of *female gender*. The combined approach of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis is adopted to achieve an objective and holistic analysis of how “women” and “female gender” are characterised in corpus 4, and the contexts and topics in which women and female gender are written about.

### 8.1.1 *Word Sketch of “Women”: From Class Struggle to Economic Development*

Figure 8.2 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of “women” (妇女 *fù nǚ*) in corpus 4, and Table 8.1 is the translation of this screenshot. Sketch Engine has grouped the collocates of *women* into six grammatical patterns, or frames. The first group shows words that occur in the frame {women and/or x}. This frame also includes cases when *women* appears at the end {x and/or women}. This pattern shows the other sorts of groups or topics associated with women. The most frequent group is *children* 儿童 {women and/or children}, while other frequent groups are {women and/or [cancer, men, development, equality, economy, etc.]}. The words of *economy* and *development* have appeared in the Word Sketch function in all of the four historical eras for the first time, which reflects China’s shift of focus from class struggle to economic development as the most important national development strategy in the post-socialist era. Resultantly, this shift has affected women’s status both in the public and the domestic sphere.

In the second column, {women + [verb]}, *women* is the subject of the verbs. The third and the fourth columns give the opposite pattern: cases when *women* is the object (both direct and indirect object) of the verb – or, rather, when *women* is the receiver of the action. All the collocates in these three columns are verbs, and these verbs will be discussed below in the categorization of the Word Sketch analysis, illustrated in Table 8.2.

The frame in the fifth column is when *women* is modified by a noun modifier, {[noun modifier] + women}. The modifiers are mainly locations, for example, {[China, world, rural area] + women}, and so forth. These modifiers show the significance of political influence which will be discussed further below. This frame also contains collocates that refer to types of women, for example, {urban + women}, {rural area + women}, {international women}. The sixth column is when *women* is used in the possessive form, {women’s + [noun]}. Collocates in this column can be seen as issues that are related to women.

and/or	Subject_of	Object_of	Indirect-Object_of	N_Modifier	Possession
儿童 妇女、儿童的	参与 妇女参与	提高 提高妇女的	保障 条国家保障妇女享有与男子	中国 中国妇女	地位 妇女的地位
癌 农村妇女“两癌”检查	发展 妇女发展的	保障 保障妇女的	帮助 帮助妇女	世界 第四次世界妇女大会	素质 妇女的素质
男子 妇女与男子	参政 妇女参政议政	维护 维护妇女合法权益	使 使妇女	农村 农村妇女	权利 妇女的权利
妇女 妇女、服务妇女	享有 妇女享有与男子平等	发挥 发挥妇女在	促进 促进妇女参与	国 我国妇女	进步 妇女的进步与发展
发展 妇女与发展	提供 为妇女提供	使 使妇女	推动 推动妇女参与	我国 我国妇女	权益 妇女的权益
平等 性别平等和妇女	参加 妇女参加	保护 保护妇女的	提高 提高妇女参与国家和	各界 各族各界妇女	发展 妇女的发展
组织 妇女、儿童组织	要 广大妇女要	帮助 帮助妇女	受害 为受害妇女提供	全国 中华全国妇女联合会	状况 中国妇女的状况
教育 妇女与教育	解放 妇女解放的	推动 推动妇女	鼓励 鼓励妇女	岸 届海峡两岸妇女发展交流研讨会	解放 妇女的解放
环境 妇女与环境	获得 妇女获得	促进 促进妇女	支持 支持妇女	国务院 国务院妇女儿童工作委员会	健康 妇女的健康和
杂志 《中国妇女》杂志	投身 妇女投身	消除 消除对妇女一切形式歧视	组织 组织妇女接受	共和国 中华人民共和国妇女权益保障法	命运 中国妇女的命运
半边天 好地发挥妇女“半边天	成为 妇女成为	尊重 尊重妇女	让 让妇女得实惠	城镇 城镇妇女	问题 妇女的发展问题
经济 妇女与经济、妇女	实现 妇女实现	歧视 歧视妇女的	动员 动员妇女	国际 国际妇女	水平 妇女的发展水平

Figure 8.2 Word Sketch of “Women”

Table 8.1 Translation of the Word Sketch of “Women”

And/or	Subject_of	Object_of	Indirect-object of	N_Modifier	Possession
children	participate	improve	protect	China	status
cancer	develop	protect	help	world	quality
male gender	participate in politics	defend	make	rural area	rights
development	entitle	play...role	promote	our country	progress
equality	achieve	make	advance	both sides (of the Taiwan Strait)	rights
organization	commit	protect	improve	all walks of	development
education	become	help	encourage	urban	condition
environment	achieve	promote	support	international	liberation
half sky		respect	let		fate
economy		discriminate	mobilize		issue

As discussed in the previous core chapters (Chapter 5 to Chapter 8), when a group of collocates of a particular word all seem to have a similar meaning or function, then this can be called a semantic preference of that word (Stubbs, 2001). For example, most words from columns three and four, such as {[help, support, encourage, mobilize, etc.] + women}, indicate that women need to be guided, that women’s rights need to be given, and that men and the state are the saviours of women. It is sometimes possible to take this kind of analysis further, particularly when a set of related collocates, examined in context, seems to suggest a particularly passive stance and thus reveals a discourse (or way of representing an aspect of the world). Table 8.2 summarizes some of the key points that emerged from this word sketch of *women*. As the table shows, the word sketch of *women* revealed a number of categories that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. Women’s recognised social status and class are no longer shown in the word sketch like in the socialist era. In addition, the focus shifted from working-class women in the socialist era to urban educated women in the post-socialist era.

The frame of {Women + [verb]} in the word sketch indicates that women are passive, waiting to be rescued, and waiting to be guided (e.g., {[help, protect, encourage] + women}). Location, organisations, and issues relating to women are also highlighted, most of which are words relate to politics, or politically related words. As Wodak (2008) points out, there are many situations where other identities override gender identities. The construction of Chinese women's roles, especially their social roles, is situated within the construction of the grand nation discourse. In the post-socialist era, the word sketch of *women* still shows the significant influence of the CCP's policy and political agenda. This could be due to the nature of *People's Daily*, which is regarded as the "mouthpiece" of the government and the CCP. Therefore, *People's Daily* is supposed to carry out its function of promoting the policies of the CCP and advocating nationalism concerning the construction of model identities for mass readers. Articles that emphasise how only the CCP can save Chinese women are typical examples that show the heavily politically invested nature of *People's Daily*:

*Deeply oppressed and humiliated Chinese women have been liberated from the abyss of suffering of the old society. Women in our country have equal rights with men, and become "half of the sky" building the socialism. How are all this achieved? It is because of the lead of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system. Chinese women have profoundly realized from their personal experience that without the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system, China will have no future; and the women's liberation movement will also fail or go astray. (坚持四项基本原则, 努力提高妇女素质——郝建秀在纪念“三八”国际劳动妇女节联欢会上的讲话, 1987.03.06)*

Table 8.2 Categories of Word Sketch Collocates for “Women”

Category	Collocates
Location	China, both sides of Taiwan Strait, world, rural area, urban area
People	children, men
Status/class	Half of Sky, status, quality, rights
Organization	organization
Issue	cancer, development, equality, education, environment, economy, progress, condition, liberation, fate, issue
Verbs	participate, develop, participate in politics, entitle, achieve, commit, become, improve, protect, help, defend, make, play...role, promote, advance, encourage, support, respect, let, discriminate, mobilize

### 8.1.2 *Word Sketch of “Female Gender”: From Working-Class Women to Intellectual Urban Women*

A word sketch of “female gender” (女性 nǚ xìng) was also generated, and Figure 8.3 shows a screenshot of the word sketch of female gender in corpus 4. Compared with the word sketch generated using the other search term of women, the post-socialist era is the only era when there is not much difference between the two search terms. Table 8.3 shows the translation of the screenshot of the word sketch of “female gender”.

and/or	Subject_of	Object_of	Indirect-Object_of	N_Modifier	Possession
男性 女性与男性	占 女性占	让 让更多女性	提高 逐步提高女性接受	知识 的知识女性	歧视 对女性的歧视和偏见
人 万人，其中女性	受 女性受教育的	在业 农村在业女性的平均劳动	让 让更多女性享有生育保险	其中 万人，其中女性	地位 进步可以用女性的社会地位来精确
四自 “四自”女性	担任 位女性担任	使 使女性	使 投入力度，使越来越多女性能够	当代 当代女性	眼睛 透过女性的眼睛看世界
其中 是女性，其中	参与 女性参与	提高 提高女性接受	保障 保障女性	韩国 韩国女性团体协议会	意识 女性的意识
家庭 妇女开展“女性—家庭—教育	接受 提高女性接受	尊重 尊重女性		职业 职业女性的	比例 中，女性的比例
女性 领导职务的女性。女性受教育	进入 多的女性进入计算机	歧视 社会上歧视女性		单位 全国城镇单位女性就业人员为	
年 年、1990年女性	走上 的女性走上	要求 要求女性		台湾 台湾女性	
进步 进步，女性	获得 女性获得	担任 担任副省长的女性		中国 中国女性	
社会 女性与社会	在业 女性在业人口的	未满 禁止录用未满十六周岁的女性未成年人		城乡 全国城乡女性就业人数为	
国家 多的发展中国家，女性约占	从政 女性从政的	理解 理解女性		中 其  中女性	
发展 发展；当代女性	参政 女性参政议政	为主 以女性为主比以男性		年 年女性在业人口	

Figure 8.3 Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

Table 8.3 Translation of Word Sketch of “Female Gender”

<b>And/or</b>	<b>Subject_of</b>	<b>Object_of</b>	<b>Indirect-object of</b>	<b>N_Modifier</b>	<b>Possession</b>
male gender	take up	make / let	improve	intellectual	discrimination
person	receive	in employment	make / let	contemporary	status
Four Selves	hold position	improve	protect	Korea	visions
family	participate	respect		professional	awareness
progress	entre	discriminate		(work) unit	percentage
society	take on	require		Taiwan	
country	gain	under sixteen		China	
development	in employment	understand		urban	

The first group shows words that occur in the frame {female gender and/or x} and {x and/or female gender}. The most frequent group is {female gender + male gender}. Women is placed as opposite gender of men equally. The other most frequent groups are {female gender + [person, family, society, country, development, etc.]}. As a member of the society in China, women need to support the country’s economic development. Once again, discourse concerning women is closely related to national discourse. Indeed, since the late Qing era, the women’s movement has always been placed behind the grand narrative of the country’s rejuvenation, or the promotion of the national policy.

The second column {female gender + [verb]} is when female gender is the subject. Verbs in this column are more active compared with other eras, for example {female gender + [take up, participate, gain, entre, etc.]}. The third and the fourth columns are cases when female gender is the object (or indirect object) of the verb, {[verb] + female gender}. The frame in the fifth column is when female gender modified by a noun modifier, {[noun modifier] + female

gender}. The modifiers are mainly locations, for example {[Korea, China, Taiwan, etc.] + female gender}. This frame also contained collocates that refer to types of women, for example, {[intellectual, contemporary, professional, working unit, urban] + female gender}. The sixth column is when female gender is used in the possessive form. Collocates in this column can be seen as issues that are related to women, which include {female gender's + [progress, development, visions, awareness, etc]}. At the beginning of the data analysis, I was hesitant to interpret why these collocates were significant enough to appear in the word sketch of “female gender”. After reading through the articles in which these collocates appear, one message is expressed loud and clear, that women are laid off in the workplace and are treated unfairly because they are considered to be inferior labour, and that women need to develop their skills, improve their ability, continue to learn to progress, and so forth, illustrated by examples below. Of course, this is an unjustified accusation, which is further discussed later in section three, **Social Role Analysis: The Return of Individualism.**

*If women want to strive for an equal social status, they must first improve their own quality and accumulate their own strength. (台湾妇女：进步与局限今昔, 孙国英, 1994.03.04)*

*We are clearly aware that women's development still faces with many pressures and difficulties. In addition to the social discrimination and prejudice against women, the biggest pressure and difficulty is that women's quality is generally low, and women do not meet the requirements for economic and social development. (首都举行纪念“三八”妇女节大会胡锦涛等同来自全国各地的一千八百多妇女代表欢聚一堂, 陈雁杨振武, 1998.03.08)*

Table 8.4 Table 8.4 summarizes some of the key points that emerged from looking at these word sketches. As shown in Table 8.4, the word sketch of *female gender* revealed a number of frames that indicated various semantic preferences and discourse prosodies. As already noted, one way that women are characterised is in terms of the extent of their aspirations, employment, and intellectual and professional level, instead of the class that they belong to as in the socialist era. The focus of the discussions in *People's Daily* about women changed from working-class women to urban educated women.

Table 8.4 Categories of Collocates for the Word “Female Gender”

Category	Collocates
Location	Korea, Taiwan, China, urban
Women	Male gender, person, intellectual, contemporary, professional
Organization	Work unit
Issue	family, progress, society, country, development, in employment, discrimination, status, percentage, awareness, visions
Politics	Four Selves, country, hold position
Verbs	take up, receive, participate, entre, take on, gain, make, let, improve, make, let, protect

From the word sketch analysis, the representation of *women* and *female gender* in *People's Daily* in the post-socialist era was still carried out in a politicalized context. The focus of the representation has shifted from working-class women to urban educated women. The national policy of economic development has been accentuated. While this section has considered the larger patterns across the whole corpus 4, the next section continues the analysis employing other important statistical tool within corpus linguistics: word lists.

## 8.2 Keywords and High-Frequency Words: Economy and Development

The top 10 high-frequency words in the post-socialist era were: development 发展, society 社会, China 中国, work 工作, women's Federation 妇联, children 儿童, rights 权益, nation 国家, economy 经济, and equality 平等. Once again, words like *development*, *economy*, *nation*, and *society* appeared in the list of high-frequency words. This echoes the previous discussion in the word sketch analysis section of this chapter, where China's economy development is at the centre of the CCP's discourse, including discourse regarding women. Figure 8.4 shows the screenshot of the keywords list in corpus 4:

Word	Word	Word	Word	Word
1 半边天 ...	11 黄启瓌 ...	21 宋庆龄 ...	31 女工 ...	41 女干部 ...
2 保障法 ...	12 拐卖 ...	22 国策 ...	32 男女 ...	42 家务 ...
3 妇女观 ...	13 黄晴宜 ...	23 三八 ...	33 资产阶级 ...	43 重男轻女 ...
4 受教育 ...	14 癌 ...	24 全国 ...	34 在业 ...	44 九大 ...
5 彭珮云 ...	15 全世界 ...	25 女童 ...	35 性骚扰 ...	45 嫖娼 ...
6 双学双比 ...	16 内罗毕 ...	26 四自 ...	36 妇女权 ...	46 妇女节 ...
7 本报 ...	17 红旗手 ...	27 副委员长 ...	37 同酬 ...	47 每个 ...
8 妇联 ...	18 潘跃 ...	28 巾帼 ...	38 各条战线 ...	48 各国 ...
9 主义 ...	19 福利会 ...	29 建功 ...	39 妇协 ...	49 在京 ...
10 世妇会 ...	20 妇女界 ...	30 同工 ...	40 残害 ...	50 姐妹们 ...

Rows per page: 50 1-50 of 1,000 < 1 / 20 >

Figure 8.4 Screenshot of Keywords List

The preliminary analysis of the top 50 keywords shows that the contexts in which women are written about are still very politicalized. This may relate to the political nature of *People's Daily* (see Chapter 3). Table 8.5 provides a translation of the keywords in Figure 8.4, and Table 8.6 categorizes these keywords and high-frequency words. When creating categorizations and assigning words to it, concordances are checked to analyse the context. Equal job opportunity and equal pay appear in the keyword list in this era, but did not in the socialist era. “Equal job opportunity and equal pay” officially constitutionalised in 1978 to prohibit discrimination against women in the workplace, and article 53 of the 1978 Constitution stipulates: “Women entitle equal rights with men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life. Everyone has equal job opportunity and equal pay.”

Compared with the socialist era, abduct拐卖, femicide残害, sexual harassment性骚扰, procurement of prostitution嫖娼 first appeared in the keyword list in the post-socialist era. Other publicized problems that women faced in China included but were not limited to unfaithful husbands, “leftover” women, the increasing divorce rate and so forth. Chinese society has shifted from state socialism to state capitalism (Lane, 2006), although the official name by the CCP is the first stage of socialism or market economy with Chinese characteristics (Walker and Millar, 2020). As Chinese society has become a market society, market principles govern all social relations. However, market does not serve society, instead, it has become the

basic principle governing the society. In the post-socialist era, while personal freedom and choices have increased, the vast majority of women, including urban and rural women, find that life has not become easier (Meng, 2012; Rosenthal, 1998). The pressure of life has increased, and the overall social atmosphere is not friendly to women. From the pornographic jokes in daily life to the media's public discrimination for women; from employment inequality to workplace sexual harassment; from domestic violence to incidences of rape, society has become more unsafe for women in China (Bulger, 2000; S. Song, 2013). The Chinese society is dominated by men in terms of political power, production means, societal resources and so forth. It is widely believed that compared with the socialist era, the status of Chinese women has declined. The following example from *People's Daily* illustrates such disadvantage women are suffering:

*I am afraid that not many Chinese women can understand the "social transition". But almost all women feel the impacts and pressures brought by social transition. Women find that life is getting better and better, but it is also becoming more and more difficult: competition is everywhere. Women always seem to be at a disadvantage. (妇女热线—我有心事对你讲, 陆小娅, 1993.12.10)*

Table 8.5 Translation of the Keyword List

half sky	Huang Qizao	Song Qingling	women worker	female leader
Security law	abduction	state policy	gender	housework
perspective on women	Huang Qingyi	March 8th	bourgeois	Preference for male over female
education	cancer	whole country	employment	9 <sup>th</sup> National Congress
Peng Peiyun	world	girls	sexual harassment	procurement of prostitution
Learn knowledge and skill. Compete achievements and contributions	Nairobi	Four Selves (of Women)	women's rights	Women's Day
this newspaper	red banner pace setter	Vice Chairman	equal pay	every
Woman's Federation	Pan Yue	heroine	on all fronts	all countries
-ism	welfare association	achievement	Women's Association	Beijing
World Women's Conference	women's community	equal job opportunity	femicide	sisters

Table 8.6 Categories of High-Frequency Words and Keywords

Category	Collocates
Location	world, Nairobi, whole country, Beijing
Women	half sky, sisters, women community, March 8 <sup>th</sup> , girls, heroin, women worker
Organization	Women's Federation, World Women's Conference, welfare association, Women's Association
Issue	abduction, cancer, housework, achievement, equal work opportunities, equal pay, employment, sexual harassment, women's rights, femicide, preference to male over female, procurement of prostitution
Ideology	Perspective on women, -ism, socialism, Bourgeois, on all fronts
Name	Peng Peiyun, Huang Qizao, Huang Qingyi, Pan Yue, Song Qingling, Vice Chairman, female leader
Politics	Security law, Learn knowledge and skill, compete achievements and contributions, red banner pace setter, state policy, Four Selfs (of women), 9th National Congress, Women's Day

Keywords and high-frequency words in corpus 4 are now divided into two categories: social role related and family role related, which will be discussed respectively in the next two sections.

### 8.3 Social Role Analysis: The Return of Individualism

In the post-socialist era, the progress of the women's movement gradually shifted from rural to urban areas, representing the trend of urbanization as a result of economic development. In addition, women workers' status as state owners in the socialist era is shaken (Song, 2013b). In the socialist era, women workers were regarded as the great proletariat building the nation, while in the post-socialist era, women workers are regarded as inferior low-quality labour. One of the first changes in the data of corpus 4 that I discovered was that the representations of women in *People's Daily* became more diverse. Women scientists and scholars, women managers and entrepreneurs were constantly depicted in the articles of *People's Daily*. However, this phenomenon aside, the economic reforms generally caused women in China to lose their jobs at a rate disproportionate to men, and have effectively moved women farther away from the equality promised by the constitution, especially in the area of labour (Honig and Hershatter, 1988; Liu, 2020). Women as a whole experienced a frustrated process of social

marginalization, and “women suffer inferior status compared with men in almost all spheres of life in the contemporary society (Li, 2013, p. 34)”. After the millennium, I discovered that the images of women represented in *People’s Daily* were complex and sometimes contradictory. Western values of individualism, aspirations for self-actualization, and the worship of Western lifestyles find resonance in those who are young, better educated, and financially better off (Zuo, 2013). Women seem to be the darlings of the new era, enjoying the fruit of economic bloom. However, the status of women has deteriorated (Li, 2013; Walker and Millar, 2020) in terms of their work opportunities, income distribution, participation in politics, social and domestic status. There are three parts in this section that discuss women’s representations in the social domain: *Difficulties for Women in Finding Employment*, *Representations of elite women*, and *The Resurgence of Female Gender*.

### 8.3.1 *Difficulties for Women in Finding Employment*

The Economic reform and opening-up movement that started in the post-socialist era has brought tremendous changes to China’s society and huge success to China’s economy. The impact of these economic reforms on women’s status, however, does not seem all that positive (Judd, 2002; Rosenthal, 1998; Song, 2020; Walker and Millar, 2020). The first and second sections of this chapter mentioned that in the post-socialist era, discourse concerning women gave way to national discourse in order to pursue the ultimate goal of economic growth. With the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, a series of national policies and regulations protecting women have gradually been eroded (Song, 2020). Women workers faced the danger of being marginalized in the workforce. It is not only difficult for women to find jobs, but they are also discriminated against in terms of payment and treatment in the workplace. With the government’s withdrawal from providing a benefit and welfare system, the laws and regulations meant to protect women require employers to provide female employees with expensive benefits related to maternity, childcare, and so forth. Collectively these laws and regulations make female employees much more expensive to employ than male employees (Zuo, 2013). Unequal employment opportunities and the increasingly unequal income distribution between men and women have become such serious problems that the Chinese government and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program have allocated funds and established projects to help women who have been laid off (Bulger, 2000).

The gender segregation of the labour market has caused greater numbers of women in the middle class and lower class to experience unfair gender treatment. With the chasm of income between genders steadily and significantly widening, gender-based discrimination is visible among young people and college graduates as well. The results of the second Women's Status Survey conducted by the All-China Women's Federation in 2001 showed that from 1990 to 1999, the wage ratio of urban women to men decreased from 77.5% to 70.1%. In rural areas, it decreased from 79% to 59.6%. In 1990, women's average annual income was 1,989 Chinese yuan (CNY or RMB, the unit of currency of the People's Republic of China), which was 79.6 % of that of men. In 2010, women's average annual income was 21,941 Chinese yuan, which was 70.2 % of that of men, a decrease of 9.4% compared with 1990 (Liu, 2020). More and more women in urban areas have been forced to leave the workplace and return home. Those women who are still working have to put up with the unjustified treatment at work, fearing they will be the next to be laid off. Not only are they forced to accept employed related discrimination in terms of lower wages and less benefits, but they also have to endure other kinds of workplace discrimination, such as sexual harassment.

In rural areas, after the implementation of the Household Responsibility System that was first adopted in agriculture in 1979 and officially implemented nationwide in 1983, farming families generally needed strong male labour to undertake heavy physical work. In rural areas, the decollectivization of agriculture, a policy adopted by the government to revitalize the agricultural economy, has played the role of restoring the traditional gender division of labour within rural households (Wolf, 1985). Coupled with the collapse of the rural welfare system and the Five Guarantees System (the earliest social security program in the socialist era of China, which is a support system that redistributes the limited resources and provides assistance in food, clothing, housing, medical care, etc., for eligible individuals in rural areas.) implemented in the socialist era, Household Responsibility System "failed to account for women's land acquisition and resulted in women's land loss (Liaw, 2008, p. 240)". Daughters and divorced women are treated unfairly relating to the entitlement of responsibility lands, and land compensation fees, and women's land rights are buried in male-centred households. Household Responsibility System places women at a disadvantage. As a result, the social status of women in rural areas has declined significantly.

Accompanying these economic reforms which brought about tremendous success to China's economy, the value and belief system, that is the ideologies, has consequently changed. The

marketization of the economy meant changing the entire labour system, and because the government made economic reform a priority, it was considered acceptable that some negative consequences, such as inequality or gender discrimination, might result from pursuing the overarching goal (Bulger, 2000). Facing the choice of gender equality or production efficiency, women are labelled as inefficient and less productive. Women's issues gradually degenerate into that woman are the issue. The voice of "women returning home" started to gain support. For the women's deteriorating conditions, women are blamed as inferior labour and women need to develop their "quality". In this era of economic reform, "as the only state-sponsored organisation representing women's interests (Zhou, 2019, p. 17)", Women's Federation (All-China Women's Federation abbreviated as the ACWF or as the Women's Federation when referring to its local branches) trained women to compete in the employment market (Zheng, 2003). Judd (2002) examines the subtleties and contradictions of the federation's attempt to raise the "quality" of rural women, a campaign that has often highlighted women's role in their own subordination (on the "quality" discourse, see also Anagnost, 2004; Friedman, 2003; Xu, 2014). By participating in the state discourse of "quality", federation officials reinscribe an old and still powerful linkage between the situation of women and the welfare of the Chinese nation. Their explicit goal in raising women's "quality", however, is to achieve gender equality, a transformation whose relationship to the segmented labour market remains to be resolved.

By the early 1990s, the Marxist assumption that economic growth simultaneously brings women's liberation had come under criticism. The market economy was held responsible for women's marginalization because of the state's retreat during economic reform. The reason for women being regarded as inferior labour is not because of their biological nature, but because women are considered the most appropriate gender to fulfil family duties. Work units have been known to deny women's requests to have children, force women to sign contracts stating that they will not become pregnant, or fire female workers, especially migrant workers, for becoming pregnant. In addition, women in Chinese society continue to be considered the primary caregivers, and they bear the majority of that burden now that the government and even the work unit, in many cases, no longer provides childcare or other domestic-related benefits. Many articles in the *People's Daily* reported on the social condition of women. For example:

*The decline of women's status is reflected in the proportion of women's participation in politics. Among leading cadres at all levels, the proportion of women cadres is still low, and even lower at the basic level. In terms of labour and employment, in recent years, it has been more difficult for female college students and female graduate students to assign jobs; under the same conditions, the employment opportunities for men and women are not equal; in the implementation of optimized labour mix, men are preferred over women, and more women workers are left behind. Some departments and units have lowered the proportion of women in recruiting and enrolling students, and unilaterally raised the admission scores for women. Among urban youth unemployed, women account for more than 70%. Women's right to education has not been fully realized. Among the current illiterate people in the country, women account for about 70%. Among the children who are out of school or drop out, there are more women. In addition, the ugly phenomena of trafficking in women and children, prostitution and whoring, which once disappeared after the founding of the People's Republic of China, have revived in recent years. (妇女权益保障法草案说明时指出妇女的法律地位体现国家文明与进步, 邹瑜作, 1992.03.28)*

China's radical economic reforms caused two types of privatizations: the first was the privatization of production resources, realized by selling the state-owned enterprises to individuals. The second was the privatization of the family, which meant that the labour related to reproduction (i.e., childbirth, childcare, and education) was regarded as a private matter for the individual family (Song, 2012; Hu, 2015). The privatization of the reproduction in the post-socialist era caused the separation of the public and private spheres. The direct consequence of this is the unfair economic distribution to women and cultural misrecognition of the domestic contribution of women. Women are regarded as inferior labour because they need to withdraw from the workplace during pregnancy or while raising children. Women are considered incapable of being fully engaged in work because they have domestic duties to attend to. Women are marginalized or excluded by the labour market, and this is directly reflected in women's declining employment rate and low income compared to men. The label of inferior labour caused further cultural depreciation and denial of women. Women are represented as low quality, unqualified, incapable, not ambitious, uncompetitive, lacking initiative, and unsuitable for the workplace. This negative representation of women caused the decline of women's social status. In the urban areas, women in the workplace are facing the difficulty of

balancing family and career. In the rural areas, women who are left behind shoulder the responsibilities of both farm production and family duties. Left-behind children in rural areas while parents are both working in the cities are unable to receive parental supervision nor the state or societal welfare support. Women of different social strata are actually oppressed by the same social power structure. Articles from *People's Daily* also noted this problem:

*Due to the unreasonable occupational structure of women, and the restriction women facing in their physiology, child rearing, housework and cultural quality, they are at a disadvantage position in employment competition. (中华人民共和国执行《提高妇女地位内罗毕前瞻性战略》国家报告, 1994.10.1)*

The capitalist mode of production has strengthened the division of labour between men and women, and the order of the patriarchy. Capitalist society is patriarchal, and the mainstream ideologies of capitalist society implicitly devalue and discriminate against women in the labour market, and continue to require women to take traditional domestic responsibilities (Eisenstein, 1999). In addition, with the rise of the economy, capitalism and neoliberalism summoned the rise of consumerism (Fiske, 2011). Women's representations inevitably are commoditized. Several different notions, such as "commodity feminism", and "choice feminism" have been used to describe the feminism in commercial cultures (Pettersson McIntyre, 2021, p. 1062), all of them adopting a critical approach to individualization, de-politicalization, consumerism, and the celebration of women's individual economic success or entrepreneurialism. According to these concepts, women's representations shaped by the capitalism and neoliberalism in a market economy society, are not a self-consumed, completed, self-appreciating and self-satisfying subject. Instead, women's representations often are consumed object in the market economy system and become a commodity, under the gaze of men. That is to say that the women's representations are defined by the "others" (Chow & Bowman, 2010) in society. Chen (2016, p. 2841) claimed that the "complex post socialist gender scene in China would make criticism difficult and even legitimizes to some extent the return of sexist gender categories and the blatant commodification of a re feminized, re sexualized woman in the newspaper articles and a burgeoning commodity culture". Because this "natural gendered" presentation of women, reflected the post-socialist desire to remove the "unnatural de-gendered" distortions and repression of women in the socialist era, to re-establish a "natural" humanity that will reboot China has entered a globalized modern era with shared universal values, a desire to

reinstitute a “natural” human nature that would enable China to enter a globalized modern era with shared universal values (Chen, 2016). Due to the political rather than commercial nature of *People's Daily*, representations of women that reveal the influence of consumerism are rare in corpus 4. The following example described commercial culture's influence on women's representations in the consumerist society:

*Advertising is an overwhelming form of commercial culture in today's society. The female images appearing in advertisements are either beautiful secretaries or administrators in office buildings, or consumers of various cosmetics and beauty products, home appliances such as washing machines and, refrigerators. They are the dutiful wife and caring mother from wealthy and happy families. In this way, commercial culture is in harmony with our traditional values, and it gives these traditional values a modern charm. (女性：跟着商业文化走？马汝爰, 1995.04.17)*

### 8.3.2 Representations of elite women

Another noticeable change between the socialist and post-socialist era lies in the increased visibility of the representation of women as intellectuals, and women in either technical or professional roles. After 1977, articles representing industrial and agricultural women workers dropped significantly, and articles representing women in the cultural and business sectors started to appear. During this era, “more outstanding female factory directors, female managers, female entrepreneurs, female scientists, and other female champions and capable women from all walks of life have emerged in society with both ability and political integrity” (*People's Daily*, 1985.3.8, p. 1). Although the economic reforms have caused women in China to lose their jobs at a rate disproportionate to men, the marketization of the economy also provided new opportunities for Chinese women to become entrepreneurs and professionals. This change reflects the diversification of women's representation; as well as the increasing representation of elite women. For example:

*They (women researchers) devote themselves to science, promoting the progress of the society. Science, in return, rewards them with a vast space for their career and spiritual development. They will become “super virtuous wife and mother”, which is to say, that they will surpass beyond the two traditional responsibilities and enrich themselves in a higher level. (愿我们有一个新的妇女观, 王友琴, 1984.03.16)*

In 1983 at the Fifth National Conference of Chinese Women, the “Four Selves”, mentioned in the first and second sections of this chapter, was proposed by Kang Keqing (1911-1992), the chairman of the All-China Women’s Federation at that time. Kang defined the “Four Selves” (self-esteem, self-confidence, self-independence, and self-improvement) as the “new female consciousness” in the reformed and competitive market economy environment. In this political context, women scholars, women managers, women entrepreneurs, women actress and so forth, have become the rising stars of the news reports.

### 8.3.3 *The Resurgence of Female Gender*

As discussed in Chapter 7, representations of women were degendered in the socialist era. China had shifted from “politics in command” to “economy in command”, focusing mostly on its own economic, social and cultural development. The highly politicalized class attributes of women were gradually diminishing. With the struggle of gender equality separated from class struggle, women’s movement is separated from the state control in certain extent. The “iron girl” style of gender equality that was promoted in the socialist era was criticized as being male-centred and male-based (see Chapter 7). In the socialist era, the personal demands of women had been repressed for a long time. After the reforms in the post-socialist era, the visibility of previously repressed women began to increase. Furthermore, with the rise of women’s studies in the 1980s in China, philosopher Li Xiaojiang, the pioneer of the women’s studies in the 1980s, put forward the concept of “gendered person 有性的人”, which provided an ontological foundation for women’s self-consciousness and the construction of self-identity. In contrast to the gender repression of the socialist era, female gender resurfaced in the media’s representations of women. The author of this thesis has coined the term “gender resurgence” to describe this phenomenon in the post-socialist era where showing femininity and sexuality is not forbidden or condemned.

In the articles generated in the post-socialist era, descriptions of women’s beautiful appearances in a positive prosody began to appear. In the previous eras, there were also articles describing women’s appearance but such descriptions frequently carried a negative prosody. In the late Qing era, beautiful women were portrayed as prone to being fooled and the target of crime; in the Republican era, there was the “modern girl” who was disobedient to women’s virtue; and in the socialist era, there was the masculine “iron girl” with no feminine features. In the post-socialist era, there are almost “normal” descriptions of the appearances of women for the first

time. Female traits have been injected back into the mainstream media. Highlighting women's feminine beauty is politically correct and no longer banned by the dominant ideology. Articles with descriptions of women's feminine appearance reappeared in *People's Daily*. For example:

*A girl with big eyes named Sha is elegant, handsome and slim, showing the unique charm of Cambodian women. They are trying to dress themselves clean and beautifully.*  
(人民不会忘记她们——民柬妇女运输队采访记, 王荣久, 1987.02.26)

*A clever and beautiful 19-year-old girl named Pang Quelian.* (在同一地平线上——中国妇女的家庭地位, 朱竞若, 1995.08.20)

*The busy municipal work has not made these female mayors lose their feminine style, and the dressing of many is quite modern.* (女市长座谈会在杭州举行, 高海浩, 1991.03.05)

*With the first arrival of the spring, the colourful skirts that originally belong to summer have been favoured by northern women, showcasing on the streets and alleys in advance. In the northeast cities such as Shenyang, Anshan, and Dandong, more and more women are advanced and trans-seasonal, wearing various styles and colourful skirts, adding a spray of sunshine to the late spring.* (北国妇女早早穿起五彩裙, 1990.05.02)

Individualism replacing collectivism was another one of the most noticeable changes in the post-socialist era. In addition, the concept of the “gendered person” that emphasised the human body also gave individualism a central position in the theories of the newly developed discipline of women's studies. In terms of linguistic expression, the two search terms *women* and *female gender* changed their meanings. *Female gender* became popular because it represents individuality. In contrast, *women*, which has a collective meaning and is inextricably linked to marriage, family and the country, was abandoned by the urban younger generation. At the same time, in academic research, the term *female gender -ism* Nǚxìng zhǔyì gathered momentum, and tended to replace the terms *women's studies* and *feminism*. The individualism and women's self-awareness emerged in the 1980s provided the core values of the

neoliberalism ideology in the 1990s. At the same time, individualistic and humanistic values such as freedom, personal rights, dignity, and aesthetics began to enter the discourse of the Chinese women's movement. Even when the state stopped providing welfare provisions, it was justified by an emphasis on "personal responsibility", which "as a rhetorical theme often corresponds to a reduction in government services (Williams, 2017, p. 379)". The unfair situation of female laid-off workers and the low waged migrant workers are justified with the reason of poor quality or low ability of that individual worker. Working hard to realize one's dreams is the core value of the modern "Chinese Dream" that is promoted by China's current leader, Xi Jinping.

#### **8.4 Domestic Role Analysis: The Privatization of the Family and the Feminization of Housework**

The decline of women's social status naturally affects women's domestic status. The domestic roles of women that were represented in the post-socialist era were closely related to China's transition from a planned economy to a market economy. The economic reforms not only brought about fundamental changes in the labour market as discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter, but also reshaped the ways in which women's domestic activities were valued and rewarded. This is because that China's radical economic reforms caused two types of privatizations: the first was the privatization of production resources, realized by selling the state-owned enterprises to individuals. The second was the privatization of the family, which meant that the labour related to reproduction (i.e., childbirth, childcare, and education) was regarded as a private matter for the individual family (Song, 2012; Hu, 2015).

In the socialist era, inspired by the Marxist perspective on women, women's full participation in the labour force was considered to play a key role in the leadership's attempt to alleviate discrimination against women in society (Croll, 1983). To support working mothers, work units provided resources such as on-site childcare, nursing rooms and paid maternity leave (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 7), which made it easier for mothers to combine paid work with domestic responsibilities, thereby minimising the degree to which childbearing and child-rearing interrupted the participation of women in the workforce (Judd, 2002). Although women remained the principal caregivers for children and other family members, and their domestic burdens had the potential to leave them exhausted or distracted at work, the impact of work effort on earnings was limited because the wage differentials among workers were compressed

(Meng, 2012). According to Jia and Dong, “the costs of social reproduction under central planning were not solely borne by women; the state and employers footed part of the bill” (2013, p. 821).

However, in the post-socialist era, the transformation from the work unit system to the modern corporate system was realised through the change of ownership of enterprise and the reconstruction of production relations. The change of ownership was realised by the privatization of state assets through a joint-stock system of shareholding, that is, the privatization of production resources. The privatization of the family, together with the division of the public and private spheres have caused structural disadvantages to the vast majority of women in society (except for a very small number of upper-class women who do not need to do housework). The state had no intention to implement any effective mechanisms to protect mothers from being adversely affected by market discipline and discriminatory practices in the private sector, in order to pursue greater economic growth (Bulger, 2000; Liu, 2020). The vast majority of Chinese enterprises, now privately owned, ceased to offer subsidised childcare to employees. Furthermore, women’s reproduction activities are crucial to human race, and also play a pivotal role in generating and sustaining economic growth (Folbre and Nelson, 2000). However, women’s reproduction duties disadvantage them in the labour market (Elson, 1999). Jia and Dong (2013) investigated how the economic transition has affected the wage gap between mothers and childless women in urban China using panel data for the period 1990–2005, and found that the privatisation and labour market deregulation that took place during the latter reform period have substantially increased the motherhood wage penalty.

In addition to differences in practices relating to women’s domestic responsibilities, the social values relating to women’s domestic responsibilities also changed. Both socialism and capitalism are centred on production, and although the function of domestic household work in socialism and capitalism did not change, women were still the main gender responsible for household duties in the socialist and post-socialist eras. However, the methods and structures of these two eras for organizing production and reproduction were different, and the way that those undertaking housework were treated and the value of housework was considered differently. As discussed in Chapter 4, the brutal collectivisation of land affected the rural masses, and the nationalisation of private and corporate industrial assets affected the urban elite (Deng & Shen, 2019) in the socialist era. With the attainment of communism and egalitarianism (Kraus, 1976), the centrally planned organization of production and reproduction in the

socialist China presented a public embedded nature (Song, 2012). That is, domestic duties and children bearing/raising duties were not considered a private matter. The state recognized the contribution of women undertaking domestic duties, and considered the role of housework as production services. In the socialist era, although housework was unpaid, the housewives of workers (家属) held social status, and were a visible political identity recognized by the state. As discussed in Chapter 7, the state bestowed a high political status to women responsible for the housework, recognizing them as “part of the working class”. While in the post-socialist era, capital in the market economy organizes production and reproduction in the dichotomous dual structure that separates the public and private spheres (Song, 2012). Home is regarded as a private sphere, and housework becomes a private matter, and the contribution of housework disappears in the public discourse.

To make the situation worse, due to China’s one-child policy (1980 - 2015), the patriarchal preference of son over daughter re-emerged in the post-socialist era, together with other issues relating to women, such as unfaithful husbands, “leftover” women, and exacerbated structural gender inequalities. As the level of women’s unemployment increased due to intense competition in the labour market, many people returned to traditional values that saw men as breadwinners, while for women, the homemakers (Jiang, 2017). In other words, the image of women as subordinate to men resurfaced (Wallis, 2006). Sufen Jiang (2017) in her research claimed that women were forced to go back to being a housewife and mother and their career path became more difficult with the deteriorating discrimination against women. More and more young Chinese women began to reject the newly constructed social role for women and this caused an alarmingly low birth rate and the problem of an ageing population. The “good wife and loving mother” which had been criticized in the socialist era, now is advocated by the *People’s Daily* in the post-socialist era. Articles praised the “dutiful wife and caring mother in the new era 新时期的贤妻良母”, that is, a working mother devoted to the family. In my opinion, this is in fact a disguised form of exploitation and oppression of women in the post-socialist era. Women are represented as having a good career, while at the same time, are devoted to their family. Examples include:

*70% of women and 62.5% of men believe that career and housework are equally important to women. (社会关注“女人的出路”, 冯媛,1988.12.27)*

*Iceland President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir is also a committed mother. She proudly talked about her 22-year-old daughter to us. “My daughter is outstanding. She is my best friend.” Although she is busy with state business, she still makes time to give her daughter more love and care. In her spare time, cooking for her daughter is a great pleasure for the 60-year-old president. (妇女当自信——冰岛总统维·芬博阿多蒂尔访谈录马小宁木雅, 1995.09.06)*

*Following her husband’s lead, Zhu Zhu trek dozens of miles to carry the soil to the deep desert. She visited the town centre carrying her husband (he had his amputation due to bone cancer). Her mentally disordered mother-in-law bit her while Zhu Zhu was combing her hair. Zhu Zhu pawned the dowry bracelet to treat her mother-in-law. Zhu Zhu is a virtuous wife and mother with traditional virtues. However, these traditional virtues not only do not conflict with contemporary values, but also complement with modern female spirits such as autonomy, independence and self-esteem, highlighting Zhu Zhu’s beauty. (为劳动妇女塑像, 李星, 1997.07.12)*

*An ideal woman should be “all-around and multi-functional” that can coordinate family life and social life. (什么是当今理想的女性女性应追寻怎样的理想 《中国妇女》杂志组织各阶层进行讨论, 冯媛, 1986.08.24)*

*After fulfilling the traditional duties, like caring for the husbands, nurturing children, and looking after the elderly, women can devote more energy to social production and the creation of a new life with their own hands. (在同一地平线上——中国妇女的家庭地位, 朱竟若, 1995.08.20)*

*National Statistics shows that women spend an average of more than four hours a day on housework, more than twice that of men. While pursuing career success, intellectual Chinese women have inherited most of the responsibilities of traditional women’s roles, such as rearing children, caring for the elderly, taking care of their husbands, and sacrificing themselves in order to achieve success in every aspect of social and domestic life. For example, Xiu Ruijuan, an expert in microcirculation who left her child in her hometown every early morning and putting her camera and microscope in her back basket every morning; Ling Feng, the first female doctor of neurosurgery in our country*

*and the deputy director of neurosurgery department of Beijing Hospital, after finishing major surgeries, she goes home immediately to take care of her son who is still in primary school. (耀眼的新星座——中国妇女的学术地位蒋涵箴, 艾笑, 1995.08.26)*

The establishment of capitalist production relations is manifested by the reconstruction of the relationship between workers and enterprises, the optimization of the labour force (reduction of employees to increase efficiency) and the separation of enterprises and society. The common ground of these two measures was to shift the duty of reproduction and the cost of reproduction from the enterprise/state to the family/individual, that is, women. Hence, these two measures together, are like an inherently consistent combination of punches, and the first target is women. Women workers are considered an inferior labour force because women need to undertake housework and reproduction duties. Most women do not have job opportunities that are equal to men, and thus cannot get pay that is equal to men.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

After China entered the global market, capital reshaped gender relations in China. Women workers at the intersection of class and gender are facing the danger of being marginalized. Economic reform and opening-up provided women with more freedom and opportunities, however at the same time, it also caused a gender chasm in occupations and incomes. Globalized capitalization is the major contributor to this situation. Patriarchy is isomorphic with capitalism, deepening social differences between genders collusively. Women are considered inferior labour in the public sphere and discrimination against women increased.

In the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, women (including women left-behind in rural areas, urban migrant women, and women workers laid-off from state-owned enterprises) have become the so called “vulnerable groups” by the CCP. Projects to help disadvantaged women advocate protecting women’s rights and interests, however, the structural and systematic problems of the capitalist market economy are not questioned. Gender equality cannot cover the entire content facing these problems regarding women in the post-socialist era. And gender equality can promote women’s gender self-awareness, but is not the answer for the structural and systematic disadvantage that women have suffered (Du, 2013; Qiu, Jin, and Wang, 1998). The prevalence of individualism and liberalism can be seen as meeting with the requirements of the market economy system to a certain extent. When facing

neoliberal capitalism, fighting for women's rights under China's existing institutional framework requires vigilance and reflection on the market mechanism itself (Song, 2013b).

The next chapter is the last chapter of this thesis. Chapter 9 takes the discussion further across the four eras, synthesizing the analysis and discussing the findings across the four eras. All the research questions set out in Chapter 1 are answered. A set of concluding statements are offered; and the contributions of this research are highlighted. Finally, the limitations and reflections are pointed out, and based on the findings, recommendations for future research are provided.

## Chapter 9 Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 5 to Chapter 8, the core chapters of this thesis, provided a critical explanation of women's representations in the four historical eras respectively, described and interpreted data, and analysed women's discourse in two newspapers in China, *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*. This chapter answers the research questions set out in Chapter 1 and discusses the findings from Chapter 5 to Chapter 8 diachronically. The first section, **Across the Four Historical Eras**, answers the three research questions with the key findings of this thesis. The second section, **The Instrumentality of Women's Representations and Chinese Women's Rejection**, discusses the functionality of women's discourse throughout the 140 years of these four eras as a tool to legitimize the national agenda, followed by Chinese women's rejection of the current constructed roles. The third section, **Contributions and Limitations**, outlines the contributions of this thesis to knowledge, and also its limitations. Section four, **Facing the Future Challenges**, concludes the thesis and provides suggested directions for future studies.

### 9.1 Across the Four Historical Eras

Different from the practice of Western women's emancipation movements, which formed on the basis of women's self-consciousness in the process of the gradual formation of modernity, the practice of women's emancipation movements in China has been closely related to the historical process of national independence movements and national strengthening movements since the beginning of the late Qing era. Resultantly, the Chinese women's emancipation movements have been integrated into the demands of social and political revolutions in the course of China's modernization. This secondary nature of Chinese women's movements restricts the development trajectory of the discipline of women's studies in China, which will be discussed in section two of this chapter.

There are three parts in this first section answering the three research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The first part answers research question one, how women are represented in *Shen Bao* and *People's Daily*, and summarises women's representations and roles in the public sphere across the four historical eras. The second part summarises women's representations

and roles in the domestic sphere. The third part answers research questions two and three, how women's representations have changed across the four historical eras, and examines these different presentations across the four eras.

### 9.1.1 *Representations of Women in the Public Sphere*

During the 140 years when the Chinese women's liberation movements occurred, women's representations in *Shen Bao* (1872–1949) and *People's Daily* (1950–2012) changed dramatically. As discussed in Chapter 5, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the late Qing era, and responding to a series of national defeats and humiliations against the powerful Western colonists, the findings in Chapter 5 show that the first step taken by the reformers in the Qing court to save China and its people was to deny and blame women. Women were not described as the opposite gender of men, but are represented as the weak, incompetent, decadent, and pathological symbol of pre-modernity in *Shen Bao*. Chinese women are portrayed in articles in *Shen Bao* as a problem and at the same time the key solution to save the nation (Barlow, 2004). Reformers in the Qing court first put forth the idea that women should receive public education as an important task to rejuvenate the nation (Gardiner, 1993), and articles in *Shen Bao* promoted representations of women as “Mothers of the Nation” and “Heroines” (see Chapter 5), which are variations of traditional “good wife and mother” and “devoted to husband and son” sugar-coated with modern nationalism. Women are still described as “obedient and dedicated”, however, this time not for men, but for the country. To be the “ideal woman” that the reformers wanted, women needed to be educated and enlightened in order to fulfil their obligation to the nation (Liang, 1896).

As discussed in Chapter 6, representations of “new women” are promoted in the Republican era in *Shen Bao*. This representation of “new women” once again emphasised the need for independent women to contribute to building the nation. I find there is a parallel comparison made between women's subordination to men and China's subordination to Western colonists are made in the articles of *Shen Bao*. For Chinese male reformers, it was more acceptable to depict the helplessness of women than that of men. Given the context that this is a time when China was under the encroachment of imperialist countries led by colonialists, this parallel comparison subtly equated the Chinese nation's weakness with women's subjugation (see Chapter 6). Hence, the idea of “save women to save China” is widely accepted in the society (Brown, 2020; Hershatter, 2004). Representations of “new women” were therefore being

utilized by the intellectuals to resolve national predicaments such as political instability, economic disarray, and social disorder. Inherited from the previous late Qing era, the inferior position of Chinese women was regarded as a crucial signpost of national weakness and shame (Evans, 2002). The other common representation, the “modern girl”, was disparaged in articles in *Shen Bao* during the Republican era. The culture of consumption and materialism was actively discouraged. Male literati and reformers of the republican era believed that although these modern “new women” could be developed in ways that could contribute to collective and national liberation, it could also represent potential threats to the patriarchal society (Ma, 2007). These independent “new women” were no longer bound to the home, but were free to circulate in public spaces, not under men’s control, which worried men. The contradictory representations of women reflected the insecurity and anxiety of the male ruling group in China at this time.

Articles in *Shen Bao* reveal a discernible shift in the regulation of gender relations: from a framework anchored by Confucian morality, in which gender relations were primarily subject to moral instruction and regulation (the late Qing era), to one anchored by the nation-state, in which gender relations came under the purview of institutional regulation (the Republican era) (King, 2014; Remick, 2014). I argue that women’s representations in *Shen Bao* are not entirely the true reflection of women’s self-awareness, but the extension of the male reformers’ political ideology. The women’s liberation movement, and women’s liberty and independence could only be secondary to the national movement, and women’s discourse was dominated by national discourse (Barlow, 2004; Hershatter, 2004; Yao, 1983). Women are still described as “obedient” and “devoted”, but to the nation. These representations of women had nothing to do with the development of women’s subjective self-awareness nor the genuine belief of women having equal rights to men. The propaganda of the women’s liberation movements in the late Qing and Republican eras is to establish “build a new nation” and “save the nation” as the main theme of women’s rights, that is, to assign a specific political role to women (Zhang, 2015). These roles conveyed in articles in *Shen Bao* and *People’s Daily* are a collaboration of nationalism and patriotism. The women’s representations in *Shen Bao* mostly reflect the ideal planning of male reformers regarding how women should be, and this plan actually embodies their desire for national prosperity and modernization, as well as a reflection of their anxiety toward the nation and identity crisis when facing the invasive and dominating culture of the Western colonists. Women’s representations are the new culturally redefined image formed

after intense competition, conflict and negotiation between local culture and the Western rivals, mediated by the tensions and interactions between past and present, East and West. Behind the change in women's representations, is the negotiation and wrestling of different political, economic and cultural powers, which echoes with Gramsci's notion that cultural hegemony is not unitary, and its internal structure is complicated (2014).

As discussed in Chapter 7, in the socialist era, besides ideological and class struggles, labour and work were also the central elements of the socialist women's liberation movement (Rofel, 1999). This historical era has received much attention from scholars, and there is considerable research concerning Chinese women's representation in the socialist era. My findings of the socialist era confirm with other scholars' findings (e.g., Croll, 1983; Evans, 1997; Wang, 1997) in that women were mostly represented as strong, masculine, selfless, and ideologically correct workers in the labour force, and as emotionally and physically the same as men. Women lived and breathed for the state, and were willing to devote their lives, youth and efforts to communism and socialism. Representations of women such as "women hold up half the sky" illustrated a huge achievement in socialist China whereby women had broken through the tradition that women should stay at home, and entered the political and social sphere to participate in the socialist construction and revolution. Although women's liberation was closely linked with political propaganda and other movements, women were "gifted" the right to shoulder "the half sky" taking no consideration of personal choices, under the influence of the communist ideology. Besides the traditional values of "Three Obediences Four Virtues", women in the socialist era had another "Two Obediences", that is, "obedience to the country", and "obedience to the work unit (单位)".

In the post-socialist era, Chinese society turned from "politics in command" to "economy in command", placing economic development as one of its most important strategic pillars for the country (Evans, 2002). The overcorrection of "class struggle in command" has led to a full right turn of the women's movement in China (Judd, 2002). As the analysis of data in Chapter 8 shows, with economic growth and a more liberal way of life, women's representations in the *People's Daily* are more diverse. Women scientists and scholars, women managers and entrepreneurs are constantly depicted in the articles of *People's Daily*. Many articles in *People's Daily* emphasize the performance of women in the workplace and their contribution to the

development of national production. Women contributing to the country's economy and development are praised. Marketizing the economy meant changing the entire labour system, and because the government made economic reform a priority, it was considered acceptable that some negative consequences, such as inequality or gender discrimination, might result from pursuing the overarching goal (Honig and Hershatter, 1988). The economic reforms have generally marginalized women (Evans, 2002; Song, 2013b). As the previous chapter argues, discrimination against women rises, women's status declines, and women are considered inferior labour because of the fact that state support for child-rearing was removed. Women are the main undertaker of the reproduction duties. What hinders women's performance in the public sphere is the unfair gendered division of labour in the field of reproduction, including childbirth, child-rearing and other domestic duties. I will argue in detail how the unfair gendered division of labour oppresses women in the section below, *Representations of Women in the Domestic Sphere*, since it involves domestic duties together with their impact on women in the domestic sphere.

The grand narrative of China's modernization process inevitably has a hegemonic tendency of patriarchal discourse to a considerable extent. Chinese women's liberation movements grow from radical social revolutions and top-down legal and administrative reforms (Judge, 2015). In addition, Chinese women's liberation movements are dominated by men, and women's rights are gifted to women, who have no autonomous control of their sexuality (Barlow, 2004). Men and the state thereby established the absolute power to define, control and utilize the representations of women in the newspapers through their interpretation and explanation of what it means to be a woman and to promote desirable representations of women in order to convey their political ideas. Chinese women then accessed this socially constructed knowledge of being a woman, to learn how to be a woman accordingly. Such construction of knowledge then penetrates into all aspects of women's lives through various ideological disciplines to control women's thoughts and behaviour. Under the silent manipulation of the male-dominated and state-dominated discourse, women are often forced to participate in the process of constructing women's identity, thought, and behaviour that meets the needs of a male-dominated society in the disguised form of apparent autonomy. Even the practice of women's liberation and the construction of its discourse have been incorporated into the hierarchy of the patriarchal discourse hegemony. In the course of Chinese women's modern history, the right women are entitled to, is the right to be a citizen of the nation. However, this socio-historical

connotation of “citizen of the nation” is in fact equivalent to the male citizen. In addition, the lack of women’s spontaneous self-awareness caused the mistake of “only seeing the gender equality but not the gender differences”, which is in fact inequality for women. This idea of gender equality means the equality to contribute as men, whereby men and women share the same responsibilities. Women’s interests and women’s discourse are replaced or covered by the national discourse and the overall interests of the state. The Chinese women’s liberation movement, which was integrated into the grand social revolution, failed to develop into an independent social movement and failed to circumvent the patriarchal hegemony.

### 9.1.2 *Representations of Women in the Domestic Sphere*

In the domestic sphere, from the analysis of data in Chapter 5 to Chapter 8, I argue the following findings regarding representations of women. In the late Qing era, the main role of women during this time is still inside the house. Women are represented as possessing traditional virtues, but these representations are sugar-coated with western and modern political ideas. In the Republican era, it is considered that women finding employment is pivotal to the women’s liberation movement, and household chores are women’s responsibility. Representations of the “good wife and mother” are promoted, to legitimize the oppression of women in the domestic sphere.

After 1949 in the socialist era, women’s social status improved. However, the women’s liberation movement did not penetrate into the domestic sphere; the political revolutions did not endanger the superior status of men in the family. The victory of the proletarian revolution and the class struggle did not overthrow the patriarchy or eliminate gender inequality. The traditional gender hierarchy, that is, the ideas of “men are superior to women”, “men dominate women follow”, and “men should go out to work while women should stay at home to do the housework” are still the mainstream social values. Women’s representations include portrayals of taking care of children, supporting their husbands, looking after extended family members, and fulfilling domestic duties and responsibilities. Articles in *People’s Daily* suggest that women can and should free their husbands from the burdens of household tasks so they can focus on their jobs to advance the state. In this way, women are able to contribute to society. In addition, articles in *People’s Daily* in the socialist era no longer saw career and family as opposing forces. Women can and should achieve both at the same time and the two are

necessary to make a woman a complete person. Women who are successful in their careers and can also take good care of their families are praised.

In the post-socialist era, articles in *People's Daily* mainly promote representations of the dutiful wife and caring mother. Women are represented as having a good career, and at the same time are devoted to family. Although both socialism and capitalism are centred on production, the function of domestic household work in the socialist and post-socialist eras has not changed. Women are still the main gender responsible for the household duties in the socialist era as well as in the post-socialist era. However, the methods and structures of the two eras for organizing production and reproduction are different. Likewise, the way those undertaking housework are treated and the way housework is valued are different. In China's socialist practice, the state recognizes the contribution and role of housework for production services. The housewives of workers (家属) are granted social status in the socialist era by the CCP, and are included in the state welfare system, although housework is still unpaid. As discussed in Chapter 7, the state granted a high political status to women who are responsible for the housework, recognizing them as "part of the working class". The housewives of workers are a visible political identity recognized by the state. While in the post-socialist era, capital in the market economy organizes production and reproduction in a dichotomic dual structure that separates the public and private spheres. Home is regarded as a private sphere, and housework and reproduction become a private matter. Consequently, the contribution of housework disappears in public discourse. If the deliberate retention of the gender division of labour in the domestic sphere in the socialist era is only a strategy of compromise to pursue economic development in a specific historical stage, then, in the post-socialist market-oriented transformation of the economy, this compromise has made women the "inferior and cheap" labour.

During the first three historical eras, it has been women that bear the double burden – family and career. In the post-socialist era, household work has mainly been women's responsibility. Although according to the analysis of this thesis (see Chapter 8), articles in *People's Daily* still promote that women should be the main undertakers of household duties. The public roles of women are reconstructed so that women can break through the traditional shackles and contribute to the construction of the national economy, and gain social status. However, when women rejoice in being able to shoulder "half the sky", they do not find that their original

domestic roles become part of the new roles. Women's freedom and independence in marriage, and gender equality regarding public obligations do not lead to the equal sharing of family responsibilities. Women's domestic contribution has been deliberately overlooked in the construction of new roles. Therefore, the value created by Chinese women in the family has not been acknowledged for a long time. Nowadays, if Chinese women only commit themselves at home, they will be judged as old-fashioned and having no ambition, and unable to keep pace with modern times. If women only participate in social production in the public sphere, they will be criticized as lacking family values and having no sense of social responsibility (as in social reproduction). According to the newly constructed roles for women, only women who manage household chores at home, raise children, support their husbands, care for the elderly, and at the same time actively participate in social production and create social value will be considered qualified women. This is a double burden for women and can be seen as a form of oppression of women.

### 9.1.3 *Different Representations of Women in Different Eras*

The different representations of women in these four historical eras can be explained by the resistance that women's movements encountered. The old obsolescent dominant ideologies representing the interests of the old power structure no longer adapt to the development of the new relations of production as noted by Marx et al. (2013) to refer to the social relations specific to a particular mode of production, and reserved division of labour for the concrete, structural composition and organization of production relations (Scott and Marshall, 2009). The new ideology representing the new power structure will appear, while the old power structure with vested interests would not relinquish its power to the new power structure quietly and without a fight. Furthermore, the different representations of women also reflect the tensions between the changing ideologies. As discussed in Chapter 2, when a new ideology was introduced to a society, this did not occur in a blank ideological society, but a society that was dominated by previous ideologies. Hence, Gramsci emphasized that any new ideology cannot ignore the existing ideologies in society and directly replace it (Bates, 1975). I agree with Gramsci that if any new ideology intends to gain an audience, it needs to be organically integrated with the existing common sense in society. That is, ideology needs to redefine and reinterpret the old ideology system and provide an interpretation in line with the new ideology for the existing knowledge, memory, and values in the old ideology system.

Representations of women have been redefined and what it means to be a woman has been reinterpreted in each historical era to suit the new ideology and to meet the demand of the new power relations. The findings of this thesis echo with Gramsci's hegemony theory that the dominant ideology which represents the ruling group's interest and benefit exerts its influence through the manufacture of consent toward, in this thesis, the meaning of being a woman (Gramsci, 2014). These definitions and interpretations are all rooted in the interests of the ruling group to continue maintaining power. For example, in the late Qing era, public representations of women started to emerge in order to assist the reformers in the Qing court (see Chapter 5) with building the nation, as the previous women's role of staying inside the house was no longer suitable. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Althusser's notions— traditional intellectuals represent the continuity of history and adhere to the old cultural hegemony (Althusser, 2020). Organic intellectuals are aware of their responsibilities in the society and promote the new hegemony. The dominant ideology is always questioned, influenced, justified, revised, updated, and reshaped, and consequently so are women's representations. Gramsci (2014) believes that this is a relatively dynamic process, that is agreed to by all groups in society, and that this evolves and adapts with social-cultural changes. The final ideology that is accepted by all social strata is the balance point between all power systems after the conflict and compromise in a society. However, as human societies progress, this new balance point is not static but is a dynamic situation, and therefore women's representations will continue to change over time to serve the interest of the winning power system.

## **9.2 The Instrumentality of Women's Representations and Chinese Women's Rejection**

The findings of this thesis show that women's representations across the four historical eras in China have been utilized as tools to legitimise the national agenda. To support this claim, arguments are made from the evidence in each of the four eras. In the late Qing and the Republican eras, the re-construction of women's roles endorsed representations of modern yet traditional women. That is, women help to shoulder the responsibilities of building the new nation and also obey the traditional doctrines. The mediated representation of "new women" in the late Qing and the Republican eras was used to promote reforms, revolutions, and nationalism. However, whether or not the educated "new women" can break out of the patriarchal shackles and survive in a male-dominated world is not the main concern of the nationalist movements.

In the socialist and post-socialist eras, although there are different representations of women and the women's liberation movements have different goals, tasks, and focuses, the representations of women in *People's Daily* always conform to and serve the overall situation of the current national development strategy, showing a strong instrumentality. Women's discourse within this perspective, together with the rights of individual women are integrated into the collective responsibility of nation-building. Unlike the women's liberation movements in Europe and America, which focussed on women's equal rights and opportunities, the gender equality advocated by women's liberation movements in China originated in the national crises. The gender equality promoted is mainly the equality to contribute rather than equality of rights (Zuo, 2013). Women's representations in the articles in *People's Daily* served as a tool to promote national strategy, which changed based on the political situation in China. When the Chinese Communist Party first came into power, women were regarded as half of the labour force that must be mobilized to build the new country. The famous slogan of "Women Holding Up Half the Sky" implied that women were equal to men in both their abilities and responsibility to follow the Chinese Communist Party in advancing the socialist revolution. The glorified masculine-looking women are described as the "reservoir of labour" to shoulder "half of the sky". Huang Yalan (2018, p.74) differentiated "women's liberation" and "feminism" discourses from 1628 articles in *People's Daily* from 1949 to 2014, adopting the critical discourse analysis approach, found that gender equality promoted by the CCP is constructed mainly as obligation equality. Huang listed the following examples to support her arguments:

*During the Anti Rightist Movement in 1957: "The task all women are facing across the country is to continue to raise their socialist ideological awareness to be able to clarify the right and wrong about the fundamental interests of Chinese people, and to pass the socialist test successfully under the leadership of the Party" (1957.8.30, p. 4).*

*During the Culture Revolution (1966-1976), the tasks of the women's liberation movement include "constantly fighting against the bourgeoisie within the party and against capitalist roaders (走资派) such as Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, and Deng Xiaoping" (1976.8.21, p.1).*

*When it comes to the Bo Luan Fan Zheng movement (eliminating chaos and returning to normal), women's task is to "actively participate in discussions where practice is the only criterion for testing truth, and to boldly emancipate the mind." (1979.2.14, p. 1).*

Among the voices questioning women's contributions to the society after the economic reform and opening-up process in the post-socialist era, the measurement of women's roles is also based on the production efficiency required by national development. As discussed in Chapter 8, with the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, a series of national policies and regulations protecting women have gradually been eroded. Women are being marginalized in the employment market because they are considered to be "inferior" labour (see Chapter 8). The policy guiding women's issues should "accord to the Party and the whole country's ultimate policy of 'economic development centred' (2001.6.23, p. 5)". In the post-socialist era, regarding the gender chasm in occupations and incomes, the structural, institutional, and systematic reasons causing this discrimination against women are not questioned. The policy of "taking economic development as the centre" has marginalised women.

China's unique historical legacy and memory have had a deep impact on women's representations in China, even in contemporary society. Differing from its Western counterparts, the Chinese women's liberation movement derived its profile not from theoretical debates on the relation between class and gender, or capitalism and patriarchy and their empirical manifestations as in Western industrialized societies, but from the very fact that socialism and a socialist approach to women's problems were embraced in China. The current scarcity of theories in the field of women's studies in China (discussed in Chapter 2) is caused, I argue, by this fact. Besides the socialist approach to women, theory-building in the field of women's studies deserves recognition. The Chinese women's liberation movements were not independent of the Chinese revolution, in other words, the Chinese women's liberation movements were incorporated into the national revolutionary movement (Croll, 1983; Evans, 1997; Hershatter, 2004; Wang, 2005). Chinese women's important status to contribute to the process of nation-building is bestowed by the state, not by Chinese women themselves (Barlow, 2004; Yao, 1983). Women's liberation movements that are based on men's standards overemphasizes "men and women are the same", as promoted by Mao Zegong, and suppresses the femininity of women. Besides, after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the bureaucratization, nationalization and marginalization of the China Women's Federation (Song, 2013b), women have been placed behind the national institutions, and the voice of

individual women is muffled by the voice of official institutional speaker. Later in the post-socialist era, the voice for women's rights has been smothered. Furthermore, socialist practice after 1949 emphasized that the essence of gender oppression is class oppression, and class discourse obscures gender discourse, making women unable to express their demands and opinions.

Although women's representations have been continually redefined across the four historical eras in China as some women gain more economic independence and can challenge the power hierarchies, today, more and more young Chinese women are beginning to reject the roles that have been constructed for them, which has caused alarmingly low birth and marriage rates in China. Figure 9.1 and Figure 9.2 below provide data from China's seventh National Population Census in 2020 to illustrate the magnitude of this problem. From 2013 to 2020, the number of marriage registrations decreased from 13.47 million to 8.13 million, and from 2013 to 2019, the crude marriage rate dropped from 9.9% to 6.6%. The image of women as subordinate to men has resurfaced (Wallis, 2006). Furthermore, some scholars have argued that women in China's post-socialist era are more suppressed than women in China's socialist era (Song, 2020). The status of Chinese women has not improved as the economy has bloomed. The prevailing voice of women in China today in society is that not getting married and not having children is women's silent struggle to fight against the inequity and suppression against women. The three-child policy that was introduced into law in August 2021 aims at addressing these above-mentioned problems. However, without touching the root that caused these problems, the trend of low marriages and low births continues.

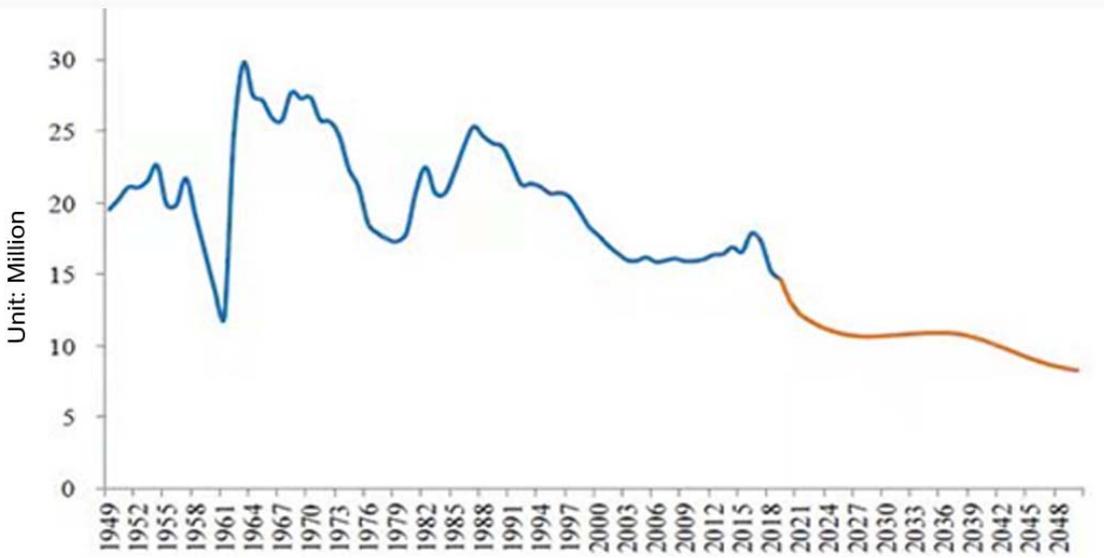


Figure 9.1 Births from 1949 to 2020 in China

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020

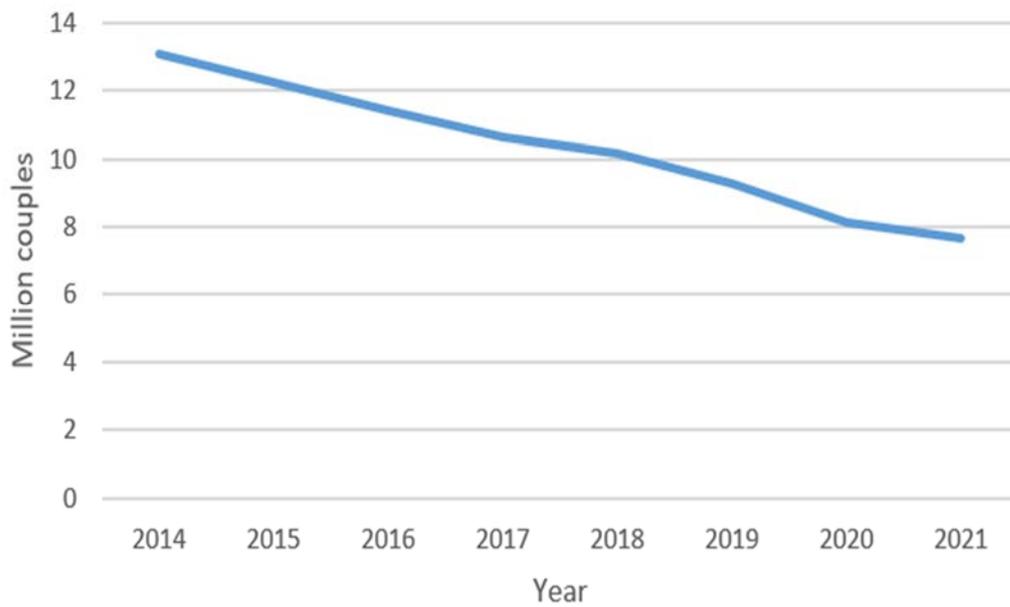


Figure 9.2 Marriages from 2014 to 2021 in China

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2021

The reason the younger generation of Chinese women is beginning to reject the newly constructed roles for women is obvious. With an improved level of knowledge compared to previous generations of women in China, more and more young women have realized that the construction of women's roles in this new era is very discriminating – there are obligations but no corresponding rights for women. This again points to the capacity of women to act autonomously and negotiate changes in gender roles. Women have neither obtained equal recognition to men, nor have they been given equal opportunities for employment and pay. The success of the class struggle did not bring liberation to women, and the rise of China's economy did not equate to the improvement of women's status (Song, 2020). These newly constructed roles assigned to women are complex and have no reciprocate value in return (Honig and Hershatter, 1988). The double burden that women face trying to balance career and domestic responsibilities can be seen as a form of oppression in a modern setting, which has increased women's vulnerability and pushed them further into disadvantageous situations both in social and domestic domains.

Although “gender equality” can promote women's self-awareness, it is not the answer for addressing the structural and systematic disadvantage that women have suffered. Scholars in China voluntarily give up their resistance against neoliberalism, and do not reflect on the consciousness of capitalist oppression. The ideas of individualism and neoliberalism that emerged in the post-socialist Chinese society can be seen as meeting with the requirements of the market economy system to a certain extent. However, when facing neoliberal capitalism, fighting for women's rights under the existing institutional framework requires vigilance and reflection on the market mechanism itself (Song, 2013b). Presently, in order to move the discipline forward in the right direction, I claim that women's studies in China need to critically inherit the historical legacy of the women's liberation movements, reflect constantly on the imbalance of the current agenda of the women's movement, position women into multiple dimensional contexts such as politics, class, society, and geographic region, and make women the absolute subject in future research.

### **9.3 Contributions and Limitations**

This thesis presents women's representations over a time period of 140 years in China's modern history. In addition, this thesis examines the tensions between these different presentations across four historical eras. In this thesis, I have put forth the concept of “gender blame” (see Chapter 2 and

Chapter 5). This concept refers to the phenomenon whereby Chinese men shift the blame to Chinese women for failures and wrongs. Discourse employed to construct women being blamed and being held responsible for failures and wrongs is regarded as the discourse of “gender blame”. In this respect, women’s representations are embedded in the ideological framework which is supported by existing power systems in the patriarchal society. Women’s representation is carried out through discourse construction, which in turn causes the defined group, that is, women, to remain in the disadvantageous position of being constructed. This construction of women’s representations by the existing power systems then serves to sustain the existing patriarchal power relations.

This study is subject to the following limitations. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 3, the respective limitations of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics (CL) as research approaches provided the motivation for the combined approach of CDA and CL. The synergy of CDA and CL helps to counteract the constraints of each approach, thereby making this combination a strong methodological framework for research. As both CL and CDA are relatively new approaches, there is clearly room for the development of concepts, constructs, and techniques. However, Mautner (2016) sounds a note of caution that there must be “checks and balances” between the two methods. The conception of the “synergy” underestimates the complexity of the interaction between these two approaches, and the tendency is either for critical discourse analysts to supplement their studies with limited CL analyses, or for corpus linguists to use CL concepts and techniques to carry out studies with a CDA-compatible focus (Gabrielatos and Duguid, 2015). Nartey and Mwinlaaru (2019) summarized research that has adopted the combined approach of CDA and CL in terms of their disciplines, domains of engagement, research topics, number of publications, area and regional coverage. However, better understanding of how to balance the two methods as a combined research approach is still in need of scholars’ attention.

Secondly, as noted earlier, the corpus of articles examined in this study is texts only, rather than a combination of texts and pictures. Clearly, pictures in the newspapers play an important part in helping readers to make sense of the whole picture. However, it is not always possible for an analyst to do everything (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery, 2013a).

The third limitation concerns data collection. In the late Qing era, as explained in Chapter 3, the term “fù nǚ” (women) was not a commonly used term in this era, and the historical equivalent

term “nǚ zǐ” (women) was used to reduce the inconsistency as including fù nǚ in the search terms only generated nine articles. Further, this study does not make a distinction between editorials and news stories, which would have otherwise rendered the analysis unnecessarily complicated.

Fourthly, Shen Bao and People’s Daily are the most circulated newspapers during their time. Without reading every article from these two newspapers that cover a time period of 140 years, it is not guaranteed that every single article referencing women is included in the corpus. It may also be that in some instances articles containing a reference to women are included in the data, yet women are not the main focus of the article. However, as I tried to read all of the articles, the effect of this was minimal.

I am well aware that the perspectives of Shen Bao and People’s Daily do not fully and precisely represent the perspectives of the whole of China. Therefore, this study does not claim that it has revealed and represented the perspectives of each and every single newspaper that was published in China during these four distinct historical eras.

#### **9.4 Facing the Future Challenges**

Firstly, as a part of the social construction by the dominant ideologies, women’s representation and identity construction not only target to define women but also to define the wider society, for example, the citizen’s obligation to the nation, power systems, the relationship between Chinese people and the governments in charge, and so forth, through the definition of women. The functionality of women’s discourse throughout the 140 years of these four eras is a tool to legitimize the national agenda. Therefore, future studies can investigate other types of discourse, for example, the assassins discourse (Qian, Fong, and Smith, 2008), modernization discourse or liberation discourse (Widmer, 2011), or examine gender discourse in a wider repertoire, for example, mandarin ducks and butterflies novels, which was a popular genre of Chinese fiction in the first half of the 20th century (Chow and Bowman, 2010), tanci fiction (Guo, 2015) or films (Rafman, 2011). Besides publications with women as the target audience, women’s writings also provide key artefacts in theoretical and textual analysis of their presence and agency. Digital archives and full-text databases of women’s literature are available, for example, Ming Qing Women’s Writings (MQWW) database (Fong, 2014), so corpus-based analysis is also possible.

Secondly, CDA is useful to examine linguistic features, discursive strategies, and representational categories. The combined approach of CDA and CL employed by this study is effective to reveal the power structure and the hidden ideology from the constructed representation of women in the four historical eras. As Egbert and Baker noted in his book, *Using Corpus Methods to Triangulate Linguistic Analysis*, the next challenge is to investigate the extent to which non-CL research methods can complement CL methods, and vice versa to enhance our understanding of linguistic processes and variation (Egbert and Baker, 2021). Fest's case study (2015) shows how CL methods can complement qualitative interview analyses. Likewise, Pérez-Paredes (2021) uses content analysis and CL methods to analyse the language policies of universities in Spain, to demonstrate the strength of combining these two methods. More studies are recommended to be conducted using this theoretical framework to “triangulate” the field. The combined synergy will not only broaden the CDA and CL fields, but also allow other disciplines to improve their understanding of their fields through the lens of CDA and CL.

Thirdly, when processing Modern Chinese, a separating tool is needed. In terms of a separating tool for Classical Chinese, there are several tools currently being developed. In November 2021, a new separating tool for Classical Chinese, *Jiayan* 甲言, to assist Classical Chinese information processing was released. The current version of *Jiayan* supports lexicon construction, tokenizing, POS (part of speech) tagging, sentence segmentation and automatic punctuation. In addition, the NLP (natural language processing) Group from Stanford University recently released *Stanza*, which is a collection of accurate and efficient tools for the linguistic analysis of many human languages (Qi et al., 2020). Although these software tools are new and still in development, I recommend employing them in future studies of Classical Chinese where a corpus approach is involved. This study piloted the analysis of Classical Chinese using the corpus method (see Chapter 3). Based on the scarcity of corpus-based Classical Chinese studies, further relevant research is highly recommended.

Fourthly, the complicated reality of contemporary China, together with its huge regional differences, make it necessary that more region-specific or ethnicity-specific anthropological research in the field of women's studies should be carried out. There are 56 ethnic groups within China officially recognized by the PRC, with Han as the ethnic majority and 55 ethnic minorities. Chow describes ethnicity as a social construct created by discourse which is rooted in the impulse to classify and understand the world in terms of images (Chow and Bowman,

2010). Thus, for Chow, ethnicity is an important notion together with class and religion when studying women. As “gender is closely intertwined with ethnicity in pre-modern Chinese ethnographic discourse” (Teng, 1998, p. 353), adopting the perspective of “ethnicity” would be beneficial in future scholarship. In addition, women’s representations in different geographical areas within China are recommended due to its vast geographical differences.

Fifthly, most existing research focuses on the broader society instead of the individual woman. In other words, scholars focus on the grand narrative and see women as passive victims in society, which resultantly cancels the subjectivity and agency of women. The life experience of the female individual is usually obscured behind the grand social narratives. Women should be positioned in their specific cultural-political spaces, temporal dimensions, and geographic spaces. Furthermore, rather than colouring the strong elitism on women, restoring the experience of ordinary women in the field of women’s studies is also crucial to the development of theory. The research object of women’s studies should be multi-dimensional. Women from all social strata, especially ordinary women who account for the vast majority of the female population in China’s urban and rural society should be included. Although they are neither political, economic, or cultural elites, they are an important part of the social foundation. Only by studying and comprehending women from all social strata can women’s studies be truly rooted in Chinese local society.

Finally, future studies could also consider applying the concept of “gender blame” that I propounded in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 of this thesis, to interpret the phenomenon of blaming women for failures or wrongs of men, due to the belief that men are superior to women.

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