

# Rong Final Draft

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**Leftover Women and the Status of Feminism in Urban China**

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### Introduction

When most people hear the word “leftover,” usually the remnants of the previous night’s dinner comes to mind. But in China, the derogatory term “leftover women” or *sheng nu* refers to unmarried, educated women over the age of 27. Alternatively, they are also referred to as “3S women” who are single, born in the seventies, and stuck.<sup>1</sup> With the implementation of the one-child policy in 1979, China saw a rise in sex-selective abortions, resulting from a combination of advanced prenatal gender prediction technology and a cultural preference for sons over daughters.<sup>2</sup> This transformation of many Chinese family structures has produced an increasingly disproportionate sex ratio at birth (SRB), from 105.9 males for every hundred girls in 1979 to 119.9 males for every hundred girls by 2000.<sup>3</sup> With one of the world’s largest gender gaps, more Chinese men are having a difficult time finding and marrying suitable wives. Yet, there has also been an escalation in the number of Chinese leftover women, a trend that may seem puzzling at first glance.

The expression *sheng nu* was first coined in 2007 by the All-China Women’s Federation, the state feminist agency, and it was officially added to the Ministry of Education’s lexicon shortly thereafter. Since then, there has been a limited number of studies which specifically focus on leftover women. Few have addressed the leftover women phenomenon as an aperture into the status of feminism in China. Some critics contend that the leftover women’s status is their own choosing, because their standards for husbands are too high and they are unwilling to be realistic and lower their expectations.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, others believe that high-achieving, independent women have the right to be picky and that men should focus on bettering themselves in order to reach the same caliber.<sup>5</sup>

Leftover women face judgment on multiple levels, between pressures from parents to judgment from potential mates to individual desires for conventionally unacceptable partners. These women are largely looked down upon for being both old and unmarried, however, educated, single men of the same age generally do not endure the same humiliation and pestering. According to a 2013 study conducted by the Chinese matchmaking website Jiayuan.com on “leftover” men between the ages of 29 and 39 years old, “even though the wolves are many and the meat is little [*lang duo rou shao*]... the vast majority of single men over 30 consider themselves to be in their golden years, without the slightest bit of pressure [to marry].”<sup>6</sup>

To cope with the gendered concerns from parents and other relatives, leftover women in urban China have resorted to a few interesting methods. In one bustling Beijing subway station, the Anti-Forced Marriage Alliance crowdfunded an ad with the caption: “Dear Mom and Dad, don't worry. The world is so big and lifestyles are various. Being single can also bring happiness.”<sup>7</sup> Since its first day up, it has received a considerable amount of support from other young adults who disagree with being rushed into marriage too early before they are ready. In fact, the desperation that leftover women feel is so dreadful that many have turned to Rent-A-Boyfriend services. To avoid conflicts and save face, many single women have opted to bring fake partners along when they visit their families back home over the holidays.<sup>8</sup>

While *sheng nu* has become a buzzword in current Chinese culture, it seems that the leftover women's opinions of their own status have been lost amidst the frustrations of their male counterparts and parents. In this paper, I will show that despite resistance and activism on the part of some *sheng nu*, the predominant societal and political conceptions of leftover women

demonstrate the subordination of feminism to other values of powerful institutions in China. In this paper, I will use the following definition for feminism from the Oxford dictionary: “The advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men.”<sup>9</sup> The significance of exploring the feminist aspects of leftover women can be extended to other patriarchal countries around the world to evaluate and improve the statuses of single, professional women in those societies.

In this paper, I will first address a rival argument that the perceptions of leftover women are not entirely negative and that feminism is spreading in urban China. In the second section, I will discuss the history of patriarchal attitudes in the Chinese language to contextualize the patriarchal values in Chinese culture. In the third section, I will discuss how females are often measured in terms of males and that such a point of comparison is not beneficial to the feminist movement. In the fourth section, I will discuss the ways in which the women’s potential partners exacerbate the leftover women phenomenon with their expectations. In the fifth section, I will discuss the effects of the one-child policy on creating leftover women. In the sixth section, I will describe how the patriarchal expectations of leftover women’s parents also worsen the women’s dilemma. In the seventh section, I will introduce different types of leftover women and how they cope with pressure from parents and potential mates to show that many leftover women have a negative self-perception due to the societal pressures they face. In the eighth section, I will describe the PRC feminist movement and question the legitimacy of that movement. In the ninth section, I will discuss the All-China Women’s Federation’s involvement in the PRC feminist movement and examine how it prioritizes political struggle over feminist goals. In the tenth section, I will analyze how the Communist Party seeks to distort perceptions of leftover women

in order to achieve its political goals. In the final section, I will consider possible solutions and fruitful areas for further research.

### **Rival Arguments**

While some leftover women are fighting back against societal and political disapproval, this is not the majority. In the past month, a viral video titled “Marriage Market Takeover” was created by a Chinese skincare company called SK-II as a part of their “Change Destiny” campaign.<sup>10</sup> This video documented the experiences of a few leftover women and ended with their parents accepting the women’s independent lifestyles. While this video quickly reached nearly two million views on YouTube and circulated on various social media sites, these sites were mostly Western and the people who shared the video were mainly from the West.<sup>11</sup> This demonstrates that although Westerners are more accepting of independent, single women of an older age, the general consensus in China is still unknown.

Although some point to established feminist or women’s agencies in China as an indication that the feminism is spreading throughout China, I will later refute this claim by referring to instances where these agencies were inconsistent with feminist ideals. I will also counter claims of positive feminist implications for single child females under the one-child policy during a later section as well.

### **Patriarchal Context**

To contextualize the patriarchal attitudes in the Chinese culture, a good indicator to turn to is the characters of the Chinese language itself. Tania Angeloff, a sociologist professor, claims

that the Chinese language supports a differentialist ideology; the most common term to describe “gender” is *xingbie*, which literally translates to “difference between the sexes.”<sup>12</sup> Instead of an entirely different, individual word like “gender,” the Chinese language defines people’s identities in terms of differences. This terminology disregards the social construction behind gender and instead suggests that males and females are naturally and inherently different. This belief that gender inequality is ingrained in society hinders the spread of feminist ideals that promote egalitarianism.

Another way the Chinese language overlooks women and empowers men is in the language used to describe relatives. If one is referring to his father’s side of the family, there are multiple terms for these relatives that signify their age in relation to the father. For example, *bo fu* refers to a paternal uncle older than the father and *shu fu* refers to a paternal uncle younger than the father. Similarly, *gu ma* signifies a paternal aunt older than the father and *gu jie* represents a paternal aunt younger than the father.<sup>13</sup> However, when referring to relatives on the mother’s side, there is only one generic term to describe the uncles or aunts. On the mother’s side, uncles are referred to as *jui fu* and aunts are referred to as *ayi*.<sup>14</sup> There is no distinction of age in relation to the mother. Because of this, when a sister and a brother have different families, their children would refer to the same people with different names (*ayi* and *gu ma* or *gu jie*) but the difference would solely be because the sister and the brother are of different sexes.<sup>15</sup> This distinction in terminology is significant because it shows the sexism even in everyday Chinese language. The expression *ayi* is also commonly used like the word “ma’am” in English to respectfully refer to any woman of a higher rank.<sup>16</sup> The generic nature of this word elucidates that the maternal relatives are not as important as the paternal relatives simply because of the

mother's gender, revealing on a larger scale the patriarchal values instilled into the Chinese language itself.

One popular Chinese saying, “*nanren sanshi yi duo hua, nüren sanshi lan zhazha*,” translates to “men of 30 are like a flower, women at 30 are wilted and rotten.”<sup>17</sup> The double standard between single men and women here is evident. In everyday Chinese language itself, there seems to be a natural advantage or privilege for males than for females. This pervasive attitude explains the rampancy of the leftover women phenomenon; if these beliefs are widespread, it should be considerably easier to persuade single women to marry and cater to men than the other way around.

Even in Chinese media today, many new articles use language that denigrates women by mocking them and comparing them to laughable objects of derision. In 2010, the PRC's Marriage and Family Research Association, an organization connected to the ACWF, shared an article with the subheading “See What Category of ‘Leftover’ You Belong To,” summarizing the findings of its nationwide survey quantifying Chinese attitudes towards love and marriage.<sup>18</sup> The first category includes women from ages 25 to 27, who are named “leftover warriors” or *sheng dou shi*, which is a linguistic play on the title of a popular martial arts film.<sup>19</sup> The implication here is that “these women still have the courage to fight for a partner.”<sup>20</sup> The second category of women between the ages of 28 and 30, “the ones who must triumph” or *bi sheng ke*, is named with a pun on the Chinese words for Pizza Hut, an established chain restaurant in China.<sup>21</sup> These women's careers have taken over their lives, leaving them “no time for the hunt” of romance. The third category includes 31 to 35 year old women, “Buddha of victorious battles” or *dou zhan sheng fo*, a spin off of when the ancient Chinese legend Monkey King reaches the status of a



Buddha.<sup>22</sup> Like the Monkey King, these leftover women have to fight a grueling battle in order to survive the workplace, yet they are still single at the end of this journey. Last, the final category of women 35 years old and above is called the “Great Sage Equal to Heaven” or *qi tian da sheng*, another pun about the Monkey King.<sup>23</sup> These women have many luxuries due to their successful careers like the Monkey King, but these leisurely habits are meaningless because they are still old and unmarried. Although this is only one article in Chinese media, many women internalize the degrading message from articles like these, and they increasingly devalue themselves with each anti-leftover women column they read.

### A Threat to Masculinity

“Women hold up half of heaven.”

--- Mao Ze Dong

One of the main reasons why leftover women are portrayed as undesirable by both parents and males is because their independence symbolizes a similarity to masculinity that many men find unattractive. In *Changing Identities of Chinese Women*, Elisabeth Croll gives an unconventional analysis of the quote above. While many analyses have focused on the “half” section of the quote, which implies female equality to men, Croll concentrates on the conceptual incompatibility of femininity and heaven together. Croll believes that, because of heaven’s association with *yang*, masculinity, and the public, Chairman Mao’s description actually characterizes women’s appropriation of public, male roles.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the female is defined in terms of the male, especially the measures of female success. When women crossed gender boundaries by entering into the workforce under Mao, they were known as “iron girls,” whose

toughness likens them to men.<sup>25</sup> This assimilation of women to men was intentional. On the reverse side of this argument, there was no terminology for men that implied their capabilities were being scrutinized because even women could perform the same tasks they were. In a way, leftover women are the modern version of these iron girls. They have also travelled across gender boundaries into traditionally male territory. According to historian Wang Zheng, “women’s employment enhanced their status at home since their income was vitally important to the family in the egalitarian low-income system of the Mao era.”<sup>26</sup> In modern Chinese society, leftover women’s income could also prove to be helpful for future families, yet perceptions of leftover women are more negative than that of iron girls. While professional, educated females are sometimes viewed positively as decisive, goal-oriented women, they are more often associated with selfishness, aggressiveness, and incompetence at nurturing and domestic skills.<sup>27</sup>

However, in the same way women invaded male-dominated areas, male influence has also played a significant role in women’s movements. Some feminist scholars who use a “gender” theory-based feminist analysis framework describe the women’s liberation movement as a campaign about self-liberation based on equal rights to men.<sup>28</sup> As the women’s liberation movement was originally pioneered by male leaders, these feminists criticize the Chinese women’s liberation movement as a “modern form of oppression practiced against women by male-dominated nationalism in the name of liberation.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Gendered Constraints**

In the Chinese culture, there is arguably a term equivalent to *sheng nu* for men. *Guang guan*, or “bare branches,” are characters that refer to unmarried men who do not bear any

children and has existed for many decades longer than *sheng nu*.<sup>30</sup> However, this expression only applies to older men, more towards their fifties or so.<sup>31</sup> Because the age gap between *guang guan*'s 27 and *sheng nu*'s 50 is substantial, in reality, this phrase only further elucidates the disparity between men's and women's status in China.

One significant cause of the leftover women phenomenon is rooted in these women's potential partners' conformity to China's patriarchal norms. According to Professor Sandy To, a sociology professor at the University of Hong Kong, men who harbored "male superior norms" were threatened by the leftover women's strong economic status.<sup>32</sup> In 1993, psychology professor Karen Korabik conducted a study that recognized the discrimination that educated Chinese managerial women experienced from partners in the marriage market during the early reform era.<sup>33</sup> In comparison, Professor To found that even in the post-reform era, four decades later, educated women with careers still endure the same unfavorable treatment; in the marriage market, they were still overlooked by potential partners for less educated and career-oriented women.<sup>34</sup>

An example of this discrimination can be seen in the quote below, from a Chinese woman with a UK Masters degree describing her failed relationship with a partner:

"He said he really liked my personality when he first met me, and he really admired me. But he said he felt that he had to spend a lot of effort to control me, so he chose someone else who was easier to control."

-- Tracy, 29, Fund accountant

The sense that the partner needed to control his woman only further elucidates that the approach towards leftover women and the marriage market is heavily patriarchal and anti-feminist. If potential partners had more feminist attitudes, they would not be as opposed to having a wife with a strong economic status, as both parties should be equal. This is only one of many instances in which leftover women's strong status induced insecurity in their potential partners.

### **The One-Child Policy**

Another relevant Chinese proverb is *bu xiao, you san, wu ho wei dan*, which translates to “of the three most unfilial acts, bearing no children is by far the most unforgivable.”<sup>35</sup> Because of traditional Confucian principles, filial piety has always been at the forefront of Chinese culture. Since Chinese culture has historically been patriarchal, men usually carry more responsibility than women in bearing grandchildren for their parents and carrying on the family lineage.

However, with the establishment of the One-Child Policy, there was a steady increase in the number of single child females, forcing families to place the obligation of bearing more children on these daughters instead of sons.<sup>36</sup> On the surface, this may seem to empower women because of their importance and relevance is elevated in the filial and domestic sphere. However, in actuality, these women's limitations are magnified because their filial expectations intensify the pressure they already face to get married. If these daughters decide to lead a more independent life and become a so-called “leftover woman,” their parents' exacerbated attitudes towards reproduction would only emphasize the stigma behind “leftover women.”

Vanessa Fong, a Population Studies Postdoctoral Fellow, argues that the one-child policy benefitted urban daughters by giving them more opportunities and less competition with siblings. Because of the traditionally patrilineal system, Chinese parents had little motivation to invest their resources in their daughters. However, with the limit of only one child, parents support their daughters more as they are their only source of care during their elderly years. Without brothers to compete for resources with, singleton daughters enjoy more opportunities and attention than regular daughters would before the one-child policy.<sup>37</sup> According to Sandy To, a sociology professor at the University of Hong Kong, the parents understandably support their daughters' university and postgraduate education because the parents themselves likely experienced a lack of educational opportunities during the Maoist socialist era, particularly in the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976.<sup>38</sup> Jieyu Liu observed that, in the reform era, many mothers were forced to retire from state firms early, and they found it difficult to successfully pursue other jobs in China's new meritocratic system because of their weak educational background.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, these parents' hopes of increasing their daughters' competitiveness paradoxically contributes to causing their status as "leftover women." These leftover women's "advantages" eventually become obstacles that impede them from finding suitable husbands. According to Professor To, many potential husbands attempt to exercise patriarchal control over leftover women by offering marriage proposals on conditions that the women fall into more traditional household roles, sometimes by completely quitting their jobs upon marriage.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, many leftover women's higher economic and educational status conflict with some men's male superior norms, effectively "[pigeonholing] women into domestic positions" where they are either too educated or not educated enough.<sup>41</sup>

### **Filial Constraints**

Parents also further amplify their daughter's leftover dilemma by having stubbornly high criteria and aspirations for their daughter's husband. In the imperialist era, parents often hired matchmakers to introduce potential partners for their children, and these candidates usually came from similar economic and filial backgrounds so as to perpetuate or elevate both families' social statuses.<sup>42</sup> This gave parents control over their daughter's marriage choice and marriage timing because only the men who satisfied the parents' criteria were introduced at all. In the modern day, parents still want this same control. However, this presents a particularly difficult challenge for daughters if they disagree with their parents' choices yet still strongly believe in filial piety, a virtue ingrained in Chinese culture.

The main point of dispute between leftover women and their parents is the partner's economic status. According to Elisabeth Croll, a Professor of Chinese Anthropology at the University of London, Chinese parents often encourage their daughters to "marry up" or engage in hypergamy in order to secure a more prosperous future.<sup>43</sup> As a result of China's patriarchal culture, many parents hope for a husband with a higher economic status who can be the household's main breadwinner.<sup>44</sup> This expectation reveals the inconsistency in the parents' approaches; they support more modern, feminist values by empowering their daughters with higher education, yet they also expect them to adhere to traditional values by leaving the breadwinning role to the husband.

This clash is even more exaggerated because parents prefer for their daughters to get married earlier rather than later.<sup>45</sup> Often, parents are so desperate to find a suitable husband for

their daughters that they participate in marriage markets or congregations where parents list advertisements of their children to single but relationship-seeking men.<sup>46</sup> The parents of leftover women have a difficult time reconciling their efforts to advance their daughter's education with their expectations of an early marriage and a wealthy husband, ultimately exacerbating the leftover women's predicament.

### Leftover Women Typology

In 2013, Sandy To, a sociology professor at the University of Hong Kong, conducted one of the few studies focusing on leftover women based on a grounded theory model. Following this research design, Professor To first gathered data and then let concepts and theories emerge from that data.<sup>47</sup> Through 50 interviews with different leftover women in Shanghai, Professor To noticed recurring patterns and formed the following four categories for the women:

TABLE 2. Chinese Professional Women's Marriage Views and Partner Choice

	Traditionalist	Maximizer	Satisficer	Innovator
Marriage Views	<i>Traditional: Marriage is ultimate goal</i>	<i>Traditional: Marriage is ultimate goal</i>	<i>Traditional: Marriage is ultimate goal</i>	<i>Democratic: Marriage may not be ultimate goal but not against it</i>
Economic Values	<i>Traditional: Wants to find partner with similar economic background</i>	<i>Traditional: Wants to find partner with similar economic background</i>	<i>Democratic: Does not mind if partner has lower economic status</i>	<i>Democratic: Does not mind if partner has lower economic status</i>
Gender Role Perceptions	<i>Traditional: Prefers slightly asymmetrical household roles with partner being chief breadwinner</i>	<i>Traditional: Prefers slightly asymmetrical household roles with partner being chief breadwinner</i>	<i>Egalitarian: Prefers equal household roles /Takes over chief earner role</i>	<i>Egalitarian: Prefers equal household roles</i>
Gendered Constraints	<i>Rejected by men for their strong educational and career accomplishments/Rejecters of men who have strong patriarchal attitudes and interfere with their work-lifestyle choices</i>	<i>Rejected by men for their strong educational and career accomplishments</i>	<i>Rejecters of men who have strong patriarchal attitudes and interfere with their work-lifestyle choices</i>	<i>Rejecters of men who have strong patriarchal attitudes and interfere with their work-lifestyle choices</i>
Partner Selection Strategy	<i>No concrete strategy</i>	<i>Look toward 'open-minded' Western men/Look toward much more accomplished men/Conceal their own accomplishments from men</i>	<i>Look toward lower economic status men who may have more egalitarian values</i>	<i>Look toward nontraditional relationship forms that bring more autonomy and personal satisfaction</i>
Filial Constraints	<i>Parents have exceptionally strong requirements for partner's economic status</i>	<i>Parents are against Western partner</i>	<i>Parents are against partner's lower economic status</i>	<i>Parents prefer them to get married</i>

In this table, Traditionalists represent the leftover women who obey their parents and comply with potential partners' expectations the most, while Innovators are more open-minded and egalitarian in terms of marriage choice and self-perception. To found that the majority of the women were Traditionalists and that their ultimate goal was marriage, but they were inhibited by external constraints from their parents and potential partners.<sup>48</sup> These Traditionalists feel the most pressure to marry, both inwardly and outwardly, and their self-perception is the most negative.<sup>49</sup> To observes the "persisting formidability of the Chinese patriarchal structure" to be the leading cause of the leftover women phenomenon and the rise in Traditionalist type women.<sup>50</sup>

However, the fact that To observed a few Innovators elucidates that there are indeed still leftover women who combat the stigma associated with them.<sup>51</sup> These women are the ones who have rejected partners because they refuse to submit to patriarchal control over their lifestyles; they voluntarily choose their leftover status or circumvent their filial or gendered constraints with innovative strategies.<sup>52</sup> Although there may be a steady increase of Innovators in the future, it seems that currently most leftover women are Traditionalist who have negative self-perceptions.

### **PRC Feminism as a Tool**

There has been substantial controversy surrounding the legitimacy and motives behind the PRC feminist movement. Historically, the women's liberation movement in the PRC has largely revolved around the actions of male leaders, and some scholars believe that these male propagators were only using the women's movement as a tool to modernize China.<sup>53</sup> In fact, while many of the most prominent male supporters of the PRC women's movement appeared to



be feminist, they were patriarchal and sexist in their personal lives. For example, Liang Qichao, a distinguished feminist scholar during the Qing Dynasty, practiced polygamy and had a concubine with him in Japan while he was an overseas student.<sup>54</sup> In order to justify his extramarital affairs, Xū Zhimo, a well-known feminist poet, likened his wife who had never bound her feet to a bumpkin with tied feet.<sup>55</sup>

Another reason to believe that the PRC feminist movement was not truly about gender equality was the only half-liberated status that women in the PRC enjoyed. Ding Ling, one of the most famous female writers in the PRC, realized that women were liberated from the private sphere, but only during the daytime. By nighttime, women were still widely expected to finish the same amount of housework as before.<sup>56</sup> Women were also half-liberated in the sense that CPP leaders intentionally excluded them from high leadership roles within the party. Lisa Rofel, another prominent PRC feminist author, also observed that women were half-liberated in the sense that they could secure cheap labor positions within the workforce but they could not achieve higher positions with more administrative power.<sup>57</sup> Even today, females only represent 21.3% of the Chinese parliament.<sup>58</sup>

Overall, it seems that PRC feminism prioritizes nationalist objectives over actual feminist ideals. The PRC feminist movement has not demonstrated a consistent stance on gender equality for the sake of feminism. Instead, it has historically elucidated more sinister, patriarchal, and political motives.

### **The All-China Women's Federation**

When Chairman Mao first took power in 1949, the All-China Women's Federation was founded as the state's feminist agency "to represent and uphold women's rights and interests, and

to promote equality between women and men.”<sup>59</sup> During the Communist Revolution, the ACWF sponsored literacy classes for women in the rural countryside as a part of the organization’s campaign for gender equality.<sup>60</sup> However, the ACWF’s actions in more recent years raise the question of how forthright ACWF’s mission really is and whether it truly prioritizes the women’s movement over the government’s agenda.

For instance, the ACWF was the first government agency to officially define the term *sheng nu* in 2007 as unmarried women over the age of 27, and ever since, the ACWF has demoralized and condemned leftover women and their lifestyles with the release of articles such as “Women Marrying Late Shouldn’t Blindly Let ‘Late’ Become ‘Never’” and “Eight Simple Moves to Escape the Leftover Women Trap.”<sup>61</sup>

In a column published right after International Women’s Day in March 2011, the ACWF stated that only ugly women need education:

“Pretty girls don’t need a lot of education to marry into a rich and powerful family, but girls with an average or ugly appearance will find it difficult. These kinds of girls hope to further their education in order to increase their competitiveness. The tragedy is, they don’t realize that as women age, they are worth less and less, so by the time they get their M.A. or Ph.D., they are already old, like yellowed pearls.”<sup>62</sup>

This contradicts how the ACWF’s offerings of literacy classes mentioned earlier, elucidating how the ACWF’s opinions fluctuate in accordance with the government, not in accordance with feminist thought.

In another column titled “Do Leftover Women Really Deserve Our Sympathy?” the ACWF accuses leftover women of bringing their “undesirable,” unmarried status upon themselves:

“Many highly educated “leftover women” are very progressive in their thinking and enjoy going to nightclubs in search of a one-night stand, or they become the mistress of a high official or rich man. It is only when they have lost their youth and are kicked out by the man that they decide to look for a life partner. Therefore most “leftover women” do not deserve our sympathy.”<sup>63</sup>

In yet another column named “Eight Simple Moves to Escape the Leftover Women Trap,” the ACWF criticizes leftover women for having unrealistically high standards for their life partners:

“When holding out for a man, if you say he must be rich and brilliant, romantic and hard-working... this is just being willful. Does this kind of perfect man exist? Maybe he does, but why on earth would he want to marry you?”<sup>64</sup>

If a leftover woman miraculously does happen to marry a suitable (but not too impressive) man, what should she do when the relationship encounters some hardships? ACWF’s article “Faced with a Marital Crisis, Women Need to Improve Themselves” has the answer:

“When you find out that he is having an affair, you may be in a towering rage, but you must know that if you make a fuss, you are denying the man “face” ... No man is capable of spending a lifetime being loyal to an outmoded wife who never changes ... Try changing your hairstyle or your fashion. Women must constantly change for the better.”<sup>65</sup>

Because the ACWF is the PRC's state feminist agency, it has unparalleled influence on people's perception of Chinese feminism and the government's execution of policies regarding women. Yet, despite the ACWF's primary feminist duties, many scholars such as Leta Hong Fincher, a sociologist at Tsinghua University, and Jude Howell, a professor of International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science, believe that it acts as just another "organ of the Communist Party" to mobilize women for ideological, political, and economic motives.<sup>66</sup> For example, the communist Chinese government utilized the ACWF to connect with women's movements abroad during the Cold War, circumventing the diplomatic blockade the PRC experienced when it interacted with other governments directly.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, when the one-child policy was still in effect, the ACWF was responsible for enforcing the harsh population control measures, encroaching on women's privacy and forcing them to have abortions. According to historian Rebecca Karl, these clear violations of women's rights "permanently tarnished [the ACWF's] reputation as an advocacy group for women."<sup>68</sup> Once again, women's struggles were trumped by political concerns, as "women's bodies became mere objects of state contraceptive control, vehicles for the achievement of urgent demographic targets," according to population specialist Susan Greenhalgh.<sup>69</sup> With the way the ACWF has discouraged women from equalling men in the professional or academic world and instead urged them to become subordinate to their husbands, the ACWF seems to be more concerned with controlling women rather than actually empowering them.

Perhaps one reason for why the ACWF's past has been so inconsistent in its stance on gender equality is because of the contradictory relationship between the Marxist view of feminism and current international views on feminism. Because Marxism mainly focuses on the

promotion of a classless society where everyone is supposedly equal, the feminist movement's focus on empowering only one section of society leads Marxists to often view feminism as a bourgeois movement.<sup>70</sup> Marxists believe that capitalism, not the patriarchy, induces gender inequality and therefore they prioritize class struggle and anti-capitalism over feminism. As the ACWF is the PRC's state feminist agency, it is obligated to include both perspectives, leaving it constantly struggling to balance the two contradicting ideologies.

Either way, however, the fact that the ACWF is the PRC's sole state feminist agency limits the spread of feminist movements. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, authoritarianism has effectively precluded the development of a competing large-scale women's rights movement. According to Feng Yuan, a member of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network in Beijing, "there is a difference between the Communist Party's "movement of women" (*yundong funü*) -- a top-down mobilization of women in service to the nation -- and a bottom-up "women's movement" (*funü yundong*)."<sup>71</sup> In other words, the ACWF's feminist movement is not an organic one; it is a government-oriented that aims to engage people rather than a grassroots group organized by the people. And this type of people-centric movement is governmentally suppressed to the point where it is nearly impossible. According to Yuan, "outside of the government's official mobilization of women, there is basically no space for an independent women's movement."<sup>72</sup> In fact, Yuan's Anti-Domestic Violence Network itself is a non-governmental organization but it is required to work in close alignment with the ACWF, defeating the purpose of an "independent" organization in the first place.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the countless number of credible articles published in the West about the ACWF's anti-feminist pieces, a search of the terms *sheng nu* or "leftover women" on the ACWF

website returns nearly no results. This is most likely because of how the Chinese government regularly censors controversial ideas that could become counterproductive to the government's goals. It is possible that once the ACWF received public backlash for its anti-feminist articles, it decided to take down the disputed pieces and pretend that they never existed.

### Political Priorities

It is unlikely that the first appearance of a *sheng nu* article on the ACWF website in 2007 is a coincidence. Shortly before, China's State Council released its "Decision on Fully Enhancing the Population and Family Planning Program and Comprehensively Addressing Population Issues" in an effort to combat "unprecedented population pressures."<sup>74</sup> In its statement, the Council expresses that the "low quality of the general population... makes it hard to meet the requirements of fierce competition for national strength."<sup>75</sup> Consequently, the Council identified "upgrading population quality (*suzhi*) as one of its primary goals and appointed the ACWF as one of the chief implementers of policies to enhance the population."<sup>76</sup>

For decades, Communist Party publications have underlined marriage and family as the "basic cell of society."<sup>77</sup> From 2003 to 2013, China's President Hu Jintao proclaimed that "a harmonious family is the foundation of a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*)."<sup>78</sup> However, the government's relentless emphasis on achieving the ideal socialist society has justified the means to accomplish it. In fact, sociologists at the Tsinghua University in Beijing observed in a 2010 report that the "Chinese state's obsessions with maintaining stability caused a vicious cycle of instability and conflict."<sup>79</sup>

One peculiar example of how questionably the Communist Party promotes marriage for social stability's sake occurred after the 2008 earthquake in the Sichuan province.<sup>80</sup> In Beichuan, a village nearly entirely destroyed by the disaster, government officials immediately urged widows and widowers to marry each other, "[pairing] grieving men and women to create instant families that will help ensure social and economic stability."<sup>81</sup> Within eight months, 614 survivors had remarried, and many admitted to marrying of "patriotic duty."<sup>82</sup>

The importance that the Communist Party places on marriage is also prominent in the way it approaches the rise of birth defects. In *People's Daily*, the Communist Party's official newspaper agency, regular reports with headlines such as "Beijing Has Over 4000 Children with Birth Defects Each Year, Cases Rise in Recent Years" attributes the primary cause of the problem to women having children at an older age.<sup>83</sup> The Xinhua News Agency, the Communist Party's official press agency and the most influential media organization in the country, refers to anonymous experts who claim that the rise is related to increase in women having their first child "at an older age."<sup>84</sup>

Tellingly, there has been limited discussion of other possible causes of the surge in birth defects. In a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2011, scientists Aiguo Ren, Xinghua Qiu, and Lei Jin investigated infants stricken with neural tube birth defects in the Shanxi province, a central place for China's coal industry.<sup>85</sup> In these infants' placentas, they discovered "unusually high levels of persistent organic pollutants," chemicals that disperse into the air when coal is burned.<sup>86</sup> However, there has been little to no acknowledgement of these scientifically-proven effects of China's industrial pollution. Instead,

the Communist Party promotes early marriage and premarital health screenings to remedy the problem, distressing young women in their twenties who wish to have children in the future.

In the Communist Party's latest attempt to distort the perceptions of young Chinese women, China's National Population and Family Planning Commission revealed *dashu kong* or "older man obsession" in one of its 2012-2013 surveys, stating that "70 percent of women aged 18-25 years crave men ten years older."<sup>87</sup> Around the same time, the government reported that the ratio of single men to single women was the highest for people born between 1970 and 1980. According to *People's Daily*, in this age range, there are 206 single men for every 100 single women.<sup>88</sup>

### Conclusion

Although leftover women is a term used in China, there are equivalent notions in many other countries around the world. The understanding of leftover women's experiences, with the government, parents, and men, could extend to other patriarchal societies where single, professional women may face discrimination or pressures in terms of their marital choices. In Japan, the term for the equivalent of leftover women is "parasite singles," which also entails a derogatory connotation. However, in South Korea, the equivalent would be "golden misses," a phrase with a more positive nature. Because the strength of patriarchal values and the importance of filial reverence varies between countries, further research about the influence of gendered or filial constraints in other countries in comparison to China would be fruitful. Along the same lines, it would be useful to explore the difference in the dominance of gendered or filial constraints in rural China compared to urban China.



The perceptions of leftover women and the pressures they face ultimately demonstrate the extent to which the patriarchy in China dominates both social relationships and political principles. While single child females may feel empowered because they enjoy newfound resources without competition from male siblings, filial expectations for them to marry early and “marry up” show that parents ultimately do not view their daughters and potential male partners equally. The partners themselves also add to this unequal dynamic; many men possess male superior norms and feel threatened by women of a stronger economic status, discouraging feminist ideals in favor of more traditional values. In terms of political struggle, the All-China Women’s Federation has been inconsistent with its support for feminism since its inception. Although the ACWF may outwardly seem to promote women’s rights, its de facto actions prove otherwise. From media distortions in official government news outlets to the emphasis on improving the quality of the population, the Communist Party uses the guise of a “feminist” agency to control and suppress women rather than empower them. By manipulating feminist advances to coordinate with governmental goals, the Communist Party prioritizes nationalistic and patriarchal values over feminist ones. With all constraints considered, societal and political attitudes towards leftover women and their marital choices elucidate that the very concept of marriage has transformed into a social construct that oppresses women and strips them of their individualized identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Schott, "Leftover Ladies and 3S Women," New York Times, last modified March 15, 2010, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/15/leftover-ladies-3s-women/>.

<sup>2</sup> It is not unanimously agreed upon that the one-child policy has been the leading contributing factor to the current gender imbalance in China. For example, *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* attributes the disproportionate gender ratio to growing capitalist companies that benefit from increased prevalence of sex-selective abortions.

<sup>3</sup> *Gender Gaps in China: Facts and Figures* (World Bank, 2006), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Leta Hong Fincher, "China's 'Leftover' Women," *New York Times*, last modified October 11, 2012, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/12/opinion/global/chinas-leftover-women.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Chen Xiaoduan, "Being Picky Is a Right, Not a Fault," *All-China Women's Federation*, last modified December 7, 2011, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/opinion/13/5971-1.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Leta Hong Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China* (New York, NY: Zed Books, 2014), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Xu Yaqi, ed., "Anti-Forced-Marriage Ad Posted at Beijing Subway Station," *CRI English*, last modified February 5, 2016, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://english.cri.cn/12394/2016/02/05/4261s915995.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Hayley Peterson, "What It's like to Rent a Boyfriend in China," *Business Insider*, <http://www.businessinsider.com/what-its-like-to-rent-a-boyfriend-in-china-2014-2>.

<sup>9</sup> "Oxford Dictionary," *Oxford Dictionary*, accessed April 25, 2016, [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/feminism](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/feminism).

<sup>10</sup> "The Change Destiny Manifesto," *SK-II*, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.sk-ii.com.sg/en/changedestiny.aspx>.

<sup>11</sup> Heather Chen, "Emotional Advert about China's 'Leftover Women' Goes Viral," *BBC*, last modified April 8, 2016, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-359943665>.

<sup>12</sup> Tania Angeloff, Marylène Lieber, and N. Jayaram, "Equality, Did You Say? Chinese Feminism after 30 Years of Reforms," *China Perspectives* 4, no. 92 (2012): 17.

<sup>13</sup> Mingjung Chen in discussion with the author, March 2016.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Elisabeth Croll, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women* (n.p.: Hong Kong University Press, 1995), 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Dorothy Ko and Wang Zheng, eds., *Translating Feminisms in China* (Blackwell, 2007), 43.

<sup>27</sup> Louise Edwards and Mina Roces, eds., *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity, and Globalisation* (n.p.: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Wei Guoying, *Chinese History and Society*, ed. Mechthild Leutner and Zang Jian, vol. 44, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Gender and Equality in China* (Zürich, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2014), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Weixin Shi in discussion with the author, March 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Sandy To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover Women"): The Phenomenon of Late Marriage among Chinese Professional Women," *Symbolic Interaction* 36, no. 1 (January 2013): 10.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Mingjung Chen in discussion with the author, April 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Fong, Vanessa L. "China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters." *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 4 (December 2002): 108-109.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 14).

<sup>39</sup> Liu, Jieyu. 2007. *Gender and Work in Urban China: Women Workers of the Unlucky Generation*. London: Routledge.

<sup>40</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 11).

<sup>41</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 14).

<sup>42</sup> Elisabeth Croll, *The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 104.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 18).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 11).

<sup>50</sup> To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ("Leftover," 17).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Chen, *The Many Dimensions of Chinese*, 39.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> "About the All-China Women's Federation," All-China Women's Federation, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.womenofchina.cn/about.htm>.

<sup>60</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 17.

<sup>61</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 20.

<sup>64</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 19.

<sup>65</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Howell Jude, "Organizing around Women and Labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 3 (2000): 356.

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<sup>67</sup> Justina Ka Yee Tsui, *Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996* (Concordia University, 1998), 18.

<sup>68</sup> Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth Century*, Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society (Duke University Press Books, 2010), 79.

<sup>69</sup> Susan Greenhalgh, *Fresh Winds in Beijing: Chinese Feminists Speak out on the One-Child Policy and Women's Lives* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>70</sup> Jude Howell, "The Struggle for Survival: Prospects for the Women's Federation in Post-Mao China," *World Development*, no. 1 (1996): 135.

<sup>71</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 165.

<sup>72</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 166.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 24.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 23.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Aiguo Ren, "Association of Selected Persistent Organic Pollutants in the Placenta with the Risk of Neural Tube Defects," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2011, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 41.

<sup>88</sup> Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence*, 42.

Elevator Pitch: I am studying the phenomenon of “leftover women” (sheng nu) in Shanghai because I want to learn the extent to which feminism is subordinate to other powerful institutions in China. By studying this, I can help my reader better understand patriarchal norms and political priorities dominate feminism in gender-imbalanced China.

Questions: To what extent do the changing views of leftover women regarding marital and filial obligations owe to a growing feminist consciousness? To what extent has the self-conception of leftover women changed specifically in Shanghai? To what degree can that change be attributed to Western feminist consciousness? What is the Chinese idea of feminism? What kind of gender and filial constraints do leftover women face? What strategies do leftover women use to deal with these constraints? In what ways has the leftover women phenomenon empower women? In what ways has it oppressed them?

Thesis: Despite resistance and activism on the part of some sheng nu, the predominant societal and political conceptions of leftover women demonstrate the subordination of feminism to other values of powerful institutions in China.

## Bibliography

Angeloff, Tania, Marylène Lieber, and N. Jayaram. "Equality, Did You Say? Chinese Feminism after 30 Years of Reforms." *China Perspectives* 4, no. 92 (2012): 17-24.

This secondary source examines the China's progress with feminism over the past thirty years. It defines state feminism as a "particular segment of actions in support of women's causes." Angeloff states that the surplus males that resulted from the one-child policy have caused an increase in female sex trafficking and violence against women, supporting the belief that gender equality has not been truly realized in China.

Angeloff claims that differentialist ideology is widespread in China; the most common term in the 1990s to describe "gender" was *shehui xingbie* which literally translates to "difference between the sexes." This terminology circumvents the social construction behind gender and suggests that the differences between sexes are natural. This idea uses Chinese, which is a potential discipline I plan to incorporate in my paper.

This source is credible because Angeloff is a Reader in Sociology at the University of Paris-Dauphine and Marylène Lieber is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Geneva.

Burridge, Kate, and Ng Bee-Chin. *Writing the Female Radical: The Encoding of Women in the Writing System. Dress, Sex, and Text in Chinese Culture*. Monash Asia Institute, 1999.

This secondary source examines the portrayal of women in different writing systems. I will specifically use the section on the Chinese language. Burridge and Bee-Chin describe that the way the female radical is used in Chinese displays patriarchal attitudes. This supports Zhou's observation of the same phenomenon. This will help my argument that patriarchal attitudes have been deep-rooted and prevalent in Chinese culture that it even exists in the Chinese language itself. I will also incorporate one quote from this source to illustrate that the Chinese language is largely male-centric. This source is credible because Burridge is a prominent Australian linguist and the current Chair of Linguistics at Monash University. Ng Bee-Chin is an Associate Professor at the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences within the Nanyang Technological University.

Chen, Ya-Chen. *The Many Dimensions of Chinese Feminism*. New York City, NY: Macmillan, 2011.

In this secondary source, Chen describes the history of Chinese feminism and the prevalent misrepresentation of Chinese feminism as one purely born of Western ideas. Chen also observes that many people perceive the People's Republic of China type of feminism to be the

only type of Chinese feminism that exists. One of the reasons she elucidates for this is that Western scholars who filter which Western feminist ideas are used in Chinese feminist academia abuse their positions in the academic power structure by omitting aspects of Taiwanese feminism or Hong Kong feminism to focus mostly on PRC feminism. I can use this in paper when I operationalize “Chinese feminism” and “Western feminism.” I can also include a few block quotes from this source and integrate them into my section about Chinese vs Western feminism. This source is credible because she is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Foreign Languages at Clark University.

Croll, Elisabeth. *Changing Identities of Chinese Women*. Hong Kong University Press, 1995.

In this secondary source, Croll gives an enlightening analysis of the following famous quote from Mao: “women hold up half of heaven.” Croll says that many analyses have focused on the “half” section of the quote, which implied female equality to men. However, Croll chooses to delve into the conceptual incompatibility of femininity and the notion of heaven together. Croll claims that, because of heaven’s association with yang, masculinity, and the public, women holding up half of heaven has come to mean the appropriation of public male roles. Croll argues that an implication of this statement is that the female is defined in terms of the male, and that measures of female success stem from males as well. Croll specifically points to the idea of “iron girls” when women crossed gender boundaries into the workforce under Mao. With a tough, masculine connotation associated with “iron,” people tried to liken women with men rather than men with women. I can use this source in my paper by connecting how leftover women are seen as undesirable because they have also crossed traditional gender boundaries and may be perceived as threatening to their potential mates’ sense of masculinity. This source is credible because she was a Professor of Chinese Anthropology at the University of London.

Demick, Barbara. “How Did the One-Child Policy Change China?: An Interview with Mei Fong.” *The New Yorker*. Last modified November 2, 2015. Accessed January 20, 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-did-the-one-child-policy-change-china-an-interview-with-mei-fong>.

This primary source article details an interview with Mei Fong, the author of *One Child: The Story of China’s Most Radical Experiment*. She believes that the one-child policy has very tangible effects on the everyday life of Chinese people in smaller cities. Because of the disproportionate gender ratio, young bachelors often face meager marriage prospects, causing their parents extreme stress because their only child represents their only source of stability and care during elderly times. Due to the one-child policy, there are less potential daughters-in-law, who are traditionally the caregivers. Fong does not believe that the one-child generation is abnormally spoiled; they just carry heavy expectations from their parents. While Fong does believe that regulating the population is important, she believes that the all-or-nothing approach



that the one-child policy takes is similar to “crash dieting” in its detrimental side effects. Interestingly, Fong believes that the one-child policy was beneficial for urban women, who do not have to compete with siblings over access to resources. However, Fong does not believe that the policy was good for women in general because of countless forced abortions and sex trafficking incidents. This source is useful because it relates the one-child policy to feminism in terms of its positive and negative effects for women.

Edwards, Louise, and Mina Roces, eds. *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity, and Globalisation*. Allen & Unwin, 2003.

In this secondary source, Edwards and Roces describes attitudes towards “superwomen” who are successful in their careers. Because leftover women are women are highly educated and professional workers, superwomen seems to be synonymous with leftover women. According to Edwards and Roces, on one hand, these women can be viewed as rational, decisive, and goal-oriented. However, on the other hand, they can also be perceived as being selfish, aggressive, and incompetent at nurturing and domestic skills. Edwards and Roces claim that gender attitudes tend to be more traditional in the private sphere than in the public sphere. They refer to a survey that shows the most egalitarian attitudes occur towards men and women in descending order from the realms of education to employment to marriage to parental duties. I can use this source in my paper to distinguish public perceptions of leftover women and give context to the societal attitudes that sheng nu face everyday. This source is credible because Louise Edwards is a Professor of Modern Chinese History at the University of South Wales, where Mina Roces is also a faculty member.

Fincher, Leta Hong. *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China*. New York, NY: Zed Books, 2014.

This secondary source is extremely helpful to my research paper because it describes many different aspects of leftover women, specifically how they have been negatively portrayed in media and how they have been shut out of the real estate accumulation in China. It also details how leftover women are starting to fight against people’s derogatory views. I will use one section of this book on the ACWF to supplement my own section about the illegitimacy of the ACWF. I will also use quotes from the anti-leftover women articles from the ACWF website that Fincher includes in her book because I have not been able to find the exact words in these articles anywhere else. This source is credible because Leta Hong Fincher is a former award-winning journalist and is currently working on a PhD in Sociology at Tsinghua University.

Fong, Vanessa L. “China’s One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters.” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 4 (December 2002): 1098-109.

This secondary source argues that the one-child policy has benefitted urban daughters by giving them more opportunities and less competition with siblings. Because of the traditionally patrilineal system, Chinese parents had little motivation to invest their resources in their daughters. However, with the limit of only one child, parents support their daughters more as they are their only source of care during their elderly years. Without brothers to compete for resources with, singleton daughters enjoy more opportunities and attention than regular daughters would before the one-child policy. This argument supports the belief that the one-child policy has positively impacted urban Chinese women.

This source is credible because Fong is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Population Studies Center in the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Gender Gaps in China: Facts and Figures. World Bank, 2006.

This primary source presents a quantitative perspective on gender gaps in the sex ratio at birth (SRB), education, and employment in China. It also analyzes trends in changes between 1986 and 2006. In terms of higher education and employment, this study finds that women are disadvantaged in comparison to men. At the beginning of the report, the researchers operationalize gender gap as the “differences or inequalities between men and women, based on factors such as social and cultural factors.” This aligns with my own ideas so this operationalized definition could be useful to include in my paper. I can use this report’s in-depth analysis of the disparity between the SRB’s of different years to give context to China’s current gender imbalance in the introduction of my paper. I can also include some of the graphs or charts in this report to better illustrate population trends I will refer to in my paper. Overall, I will be able to use data from this source to illustrate the absence of gender equality and feminism in Shanghai. This source is credible because it is provided by the World Bank, which is a prominent international financial institution.

Greenhalgh, Susan. *Fresh Winds in Beijing: Chinese Feminists Speak out on the One-Child Policy and Women’s Lives*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

This secondary source describes the involvement of the ACWF in the enforcement of the government’s one-child policy. It details how anti-feminist the ACWF is because it violated women’s rights and invaded their privacy by forcing them to have abortions. I will include a quote from this source in my section about ACWF to illustrate how they prioritize government goals over feminist ones. This source is credible because she is the director of the Social Anthropology program at Harvard University.

Guoying, Wei. *Chinese History and Society*. Edited by Mechthild Leutner and Zang Jian. Vol. 44 of *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Gender and Equality in China*. Zürich, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2014.

In this secondary source, Wei GuoYing observes a divide in the Chinese feminist realm. Feminists who use a “gender” theory-based feminist analysis framework believe that the women’s liberation movement is about self-liberation based on equal rights to men. As the women’s liberation movement was originally pioneered by male leaders, these feminists critique the Chinese women’s liberation movement as a “modern form of oppression practiced against women by male-dominated nationalism in the name of liberation.” This idea that the women’s liberation movement in itself is corrupted and backfiring against women is very interesting and I plan to research further on this issue. I can also use this source in my section about Chinese vs Western feminism. This source is credible because it is a part of an academic journal written for scholars.

Karl, Rebecca E. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth Century. Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society.* Duke University Press Books, 2010.

This secondary source also details the involvement of the ACWF in the enforcement of the one-child policy. In this book, Karl agrees with Zhou and Greenhalgh that the ACWF abused its power and was anti-feminist when it forced women to have abortions. I will incorporate one quote from this source that the ACWF’s reputation as a feminist agency was forever tarnished because of these anti-feminist actions. Having three credible sources that agree that the ACWF is more of a governmental organization than a feminist agency lends more credibility to my argument. This source is credible because Karl is an Associate Professor of History at the New York University and she has a PhD in History from Duke University.

Peterson, Hayley. “What It’s like to Rent a Boyfriend in China.” *Business Insider*. <http://www.businessinsider.com/what-its-like-to-rent-a-boyfriend-in-china-2014-2>.

In this article, Melanie Lee, a blogger for Alibaba, shares her experience of renting a boyfriend with Business Insider. Although the news article is a tertiary source, I will be using primary source quotes from Melanie herself about using the rent-a-boyfriend service. Recently, there has been a large increase in rent-a-boyfriend services because more single women are becoming ashamed or annoyed when their parents nag them about getting married. Because this phenomenon has been relatively new, there hasn’t been much mention of these rent-a-boyfriend services in scholarly sources. I can use this source by incorporating Melanie’s personal anecdote in my introduction to emphasize how important marriage is in Chinese culture. This source is valid because the quotes come directly from Melanie herself and Business Insider is an established news outlet.

Pratten, Nyima. “Don’t Pity China’s ‘Leftover Women,’ They’ve Got More Going for Them than You Realize.” *Independent*. Last modified March 19, 2013. Accessed February 1,

2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/dont-pity-chinas-leftover-women-theyve-got-more-going-for-them-than-you-realise-8536872.html>.

In this primary source, Nyima disagrees with the general assumption that the term shengnu (leftover women) has a negative connotation and instead argues that it could be a positive notion. She says that most Westerners overlook the fact that sheng could also mean successful, depending on the character. She believes that the term was originally intended to be a play on words to portray a single, successful woman in a positive light. This is helpful to my paper because it introduces a different perspective that disagrees with popular consensus. It supports the belief that the one-child policy and the gender imbalance it has created affects urban Chinese women in a positive way. This can also help with the incorporation of the Chinese discipline in my paper.

This source is credible because Nyima is a Managing Editor who is based in China and who has Chinese heritage.

Sharygin, Ethan, Avraham Ebenstein, and Monica Das Gupta. "Implications of China's Future Bride Shortage for the Geographical Distribution and Social Protection Needs of Never-married Men." *Population Studies* 67, no. 1 (2013).

This secondary source predicts that women in China will migrate to wealthier areas in order to marry men with better prospects. This move will exaggerate the "surplus men" effect in low-income provinces where there are less social protection programs. This study concludes that this geographic concentration is "socially disruptive." One solution that this study identifies is the expansion of coverage and a more centralized financing system for social protection programs. While this information does not directly relate to the topic of feminism in relation to leftover women, these predicted impacts of a transformed marriage market emphasizes the significance of this issue and I can use this as a part of my introduction or conclusion. The gender imbalance and lack of social security are both factors that contribute to the emphasis placed on marriage in Chinese culture and against the growth of feminist consciousness. This source is credible because it is published in an academic journal, *Population Studies*, and the authors are affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, the Hebrew University at Jerusalem, and the World Bank.

Tatlow, Didi Kirsten. "Q and A: Leta Hong Fincher on 'Leftover Women'." *New York Times*. Last modified May 14, 2014. Accessed February 2, 2016. <http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/14/q-a-leta-hong-fischer-on-leftover-women/>.

In this primary source, a journalist is interviewing Leta Hong Fincher, the author of *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China*. Fincher claims that the "leftover women" campaign by the government is being conducted for its own benefit, and not for the benefit of the general people. According to Fincher, because the government sees the

millions of surplus men as a threat to social stability, it is using the leftover women media campaign to convince the women to lower their standards when choosing partners. Fincher also believes that the Chinese government aims to upgrade its “population quality” by having well-educated, urban women reproduce more and presumably have superior children. Fincher’s ideas support the belief that the one-child policy and the gender imbalance are harmful to gender equality because they oppress women socially.

This source is credible because Fincher has a PhD in Sociology and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor for the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University.

To, Sandy. ““My Mother Wants Me to Jiaru-haomen (Marry into a Rich and Powerful Family)!”: Exploring the Pathways to “Altruistic Individualism” in Chinese Professional Women’s Filial Strategies of Marital Choice.” SAGE Open, 2015.

This secondary source investigates how leftover women deal with filial constraints, and specifically how they use altruistic individualism to consider filial concerns without completely sacrificing their individual ideals. This study complements the “Understanding Sheng Nu” article by going more in-depth about the preservation of individualism in spite of filial pressures beyond categorizations of leftover women into different types. Professor To introduces strategies such as “deferring” and “negotiation,” which sheds light on how the negative connotation behind leftover women may be perpetuated by parents as well as men. This source is credible because Sandy To is a sociology professor at the University of Hong Kong and she has received a PhD in sociology from the University of Cambridge.

———“Understanding Sheng Nu (“Leftover Women”): The Phenomenon of Late Marriage among Chinese Professional Women.” *Symbolic Interaction* 36, no. 1 (January 2013).

This secondary source devises a typological grounded theory for leftover women and relates them to China’s patriarchal structure. This is the first study that specifically categorizes leftover women into different types based on how they deal with filial and gender-related pressures. This degree of depth is very useful for my paper because it will allow me to build upon what Professor To has already clearly laid out instead of having to sift through speculations about leftover women myself. Professor To’s study also focuses on Shanghai, the region of interest for my research. I originally believed that places with more western influence would attach more of a positive connotation to the term leftover women, but in Professor To’s research, she concluded that even in Hong Kong, a place that was once under British rule, attitudes about leftover women are relatively similar to those in Shanghai. This source is credible for the same reasons stated for the other source by Professor To.

Yang, Chenmeng. “西安一高校发“宣誓卡” 要求女生拒绝婚前性行为” [Xi'an Universities Issued a “Sworn Card” Requiring Girls to Refuse Premarital Sex]. China Daily. Last modified November 6, 2015. Accessed February 2, 2016. <http://news.hsw.cn/system/2015/1106/323014.shtml>.

In this primary source, some female students at Xidan University in Xi'an, China are being interviewed about an abstinence pledge they were required to sign in order to participate in a “No Regrets Youth” course. A rough translation of what is on the commitment card is: “I promise to myself, my family, my friends and my future spouse and children that I will refuse all kinds of premarital intercourse before I step into a lifelong monogamous marriage.” Some students agree with the school's approach but some students don't believe the school is entitled to a high moral ground and that they should stand to have their “dignity trampled on.” The fact that only the female students were asked required to sign this pledge elucidates the sexist attitudes within the college that only the women would solely responsible for a consensual act between two people. This specific event supports the belief that the gender imbalance and the sexist attitudes that come with it have negatively impacted urban Chinese women. This source is credible because it contains primary accounts of an event.

Zhou, Jinghao. *Remaking China's Public Philosophy and Chinese Women's Liberation: The Volatile Mixing of Confucianism, Marxism, and Feminism*. Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.

In this secondary source, Zhou observes how Chinese language reflects anti-women attitudes. According to Zhou, 70% of the Chinese characters that involve the radical “woman” have derogatory natures. Even the two Chinese characters that mean “woman” have derogatory connotations. The radical “woman” photographically resembles a woman kneeling down and the right part of the first character literally translates to “broom.” These observations imply that the primary responsibility of Chinese women is to tend to domestic duties I can use this source in my paper by contrasting how important it was for Chinese women to remain in the private, domestic sphere with how leftover women are in the public, working sphere. This source is credible because Jinghao Zhou is an Assistant Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.