

CHINA'S TRANSFORMATION TO A MARKET ECONOMY AND ITS IMPACT ON GENDER INEQUALITIES – A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

MARTYNA NOWAK

ABSTRACT

The change that China has undergone in the past decades has 'mesmerised' the world, leading to statements claiming that the 21st century will 'belong' to that country. China has risen to become a global power, the world's factory, and a place where the speed of social change has no comparison. This paper offers an overview of the specificity of China's transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, while maintaining the one-party rule of the Communist Party of China, with particular attention to the situation of women during these challenging times. The primary purpose of this paper is to propose the theoretical framework for further research on gender inequalities in post-reform China, which allows the complex situation of the 'mix' between the post-socialist state and the market economy to be taken into consideration. It suggests the need to go beyond the structural approach as the only way of challenging the dominant and changeable discourses and how they are being internalised and reproduced in everyday interactions under the interlocked systems of the state, culture and free market.

DOI: 10.23762/FSO_VOL8_NO4_4

KEY WORDS

China, post-socialism, gender inequality, post-structural feminism.

MARTYNA NOWAK

e-mail: martyna.nowak85@gmail.com
Hong Kong Polytechnic University,
Hong Kong

Introduction

After the upheavals of the civil war and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the country went through several economic and political changes, leading to the opening-up policy in 1978 when it began to reject the principles of social collectivism and commenced the transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market economy (Xu and Li, 2009). To this end, China has slowly started to move from the socialist welfare approach to becoming a neo-liberal state and the promotion of self-reliance of the individual (Chen, 2018).

In recent decades, China has mesmerised the world with its fast-growing economy, development and modernisation. It has cemented itself as a world power with an all-encompassing presence in the global economy, becoming a significant force to be reckoned with and gaining importance in nearly all political, social and economic fields. Often overlooked, however, are the costs, primarily social and gendered, of such radical and rapid changes. Unemployment, growing income gaps, horrifying pollution levels and all of the associated consequences are the price

China must pay for its continually growing GDP (Naughton, 2018). Additionally, China must grapple with the changes caused by probably one of the most significant, fastest and most unnatural population control programmes, known worldwide as the one-child policy. In one generation it has turned China from an overpopulated country to one which has heavy clouds of fear hanging over it concerning an ageing population (Flaherty et al., 2007); and - crucially in the context of this study - creating a heavy burden for women who are expected to care for their elderly parents and parents-in-law (see Table 1) and who are responsible for 75% of long-term elderly care in

China (Glass et al., 2013), which they do in addition to their role as primary carers for children (Greenhalgh, 2010).

The complicated past of China and its rapid growth and opening to the market economy, while maintaining the one-party rule (Tsai, 2007), poses a significant question as to the framework of accessing gender inequalities. It is even more complicated when we take into consideration the sheer size of China and the differences between urban and rural areas or the interior of the country and the coast, where the first Special Economic Zones (SEZ) with the 'rule' of the free-market economy were opened first (Park, 1997).

Table 1. Living arrangements of the elderly population (aged 65+)

	Rural-urban combined			2000 rural vs. urban	
	1982	1990	2000	Rural	Urban
Males					
Living alone	10.7	8.3	8.4	8.7	7.7
With spouse only	16.9	20.7	28.8	26.3	33.7
With spouse & others, not with children	0.8	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8
With spouse & children	39.9	40.6	37.4	36.5	39
With children, not with spouse	28	27	22.6	25.6	16.8
With others, not with spouse & children	2.2	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.3
Institution	1.5	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.7
Grand total	100	100	100	100	100
Subtotal - living with spouse	57.6	61.8	66.9	63.5	73.5
Subtotal - living with children	67.9	67.6	59.9	62.1	55.8
Females					
Living alone	13.7	10.8	10.7	9.8	12.4
With spouse only	10.6	13.4	19.1	17.9	21.3
With spouse & others, not with children	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6
With spouse & children	16.2	19.6	22.4	22.8	21.7
With children, not with spouse	57.5	54.3	46.2	48.1	42.6
With others, not with spouse & children	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.9	1
Institution	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.4
Grand total	100	100	100	100	100
Subtotal - living with spouse	27.2	33.3	41.9	41	43.6
Subtotal - living with children	73.6	74	68.7	70.9	64.4

Source: Yi and Wang, 2003.

This paper aims to fill the research gap existing in the literature regarding the approach to research on gender inequalities in the specific situation of post-reform China with its one-party rule. It proposes the theoretical framework for future research on the topic, especially for studies done on the analysis of the impact of social policy on gender inequalities, which does not fall into the "trap" of structural analysis and gives a chance for a more in-depth exploration of the complexity of the phenomenon, taking previously omitted or oversimplified factors into consideration.

1. Literature review

The transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy and at least some aspects of capitalism inevitably led to changes in the social stratification of the given society. Probably the two most 'spectacular' transitions of socialist countries to the post-communism stage in the twentieth century were the transitions of Central and Eastern Europe and China. Although conducted differently, and at least partially, with different aims, in both parts of the world these transitions led to dramatic social change, the emergence of a new social order and social stratification. When we realise that this transition has affected one-third of the world's population (Lane, 1996), the need for a more in-depth understanding of this change and its consequences becomes even more apparent.

While China cannot be considered a unique example of a socialist country changing to a market economy and the 'access' to the outside world this change provided (Jayachandran, 2015), its case is highly specific. It is remarkable not only because of the way the system has transformed, but also because of the speed and range of those changes. Barely ten years separated the disastrous Cultural Revolution from the economic reforms of Deng Xi-

aoping and the emergence of China in the world market. It did not take much longer for China to be declared an economic miracle and become a world superpower. As summarised by Jamie FlorCruz of CNN, who worked in the Chinese countryside in the 1970s, "incredibly, China has pulled off the equivalent of reform, renaissance and industrial revolution in 30 years" (FlorCruz, 2008).

Those who were born in socialist countries and grew up in newly emerging capitalist ones are probably not mesmerised by the differences in the lives and life experiences of those who have lived through the nightmares of Mao's collectivist experiment, those who had to learn the hard and fast rules of a market economy and fight their way to survival in the transformation period, and those who are today dreaming about the most luxurious goods the world has to offer. The lives of today's grandparents and their grandchildren seems to be as different as it could be – and here, China does not stand alone.

1.1. Capitals that matter

Before moving to the complicated situation of post-reform China, it is essential to reflect on the situation of inequalities in the socialist states, especially since the "backbone" (and the reason it has gained many "supporters") underlying the concept is its critique of the existing social stratification of capitalist societies and its promise to guarantee an egalitarian society, security and state patronage for everyone (Dunn, 1984).

Putting aside the different paths to socialism taken by various countries (revolution in Russia, civil war in China, or the decision taken at the Yalta Conference in the case of Poland), the theoretically classless societies of socialist states aiming for universal equity in reality turned out to be quite far from the optimistic assumptions,

even though the income gaps between people – in urban areas in the case of China (Sicular et al., 2007) – did not vary significantly.

In order to understand the social stratification which did not 'disappear' together with the transformation of the system, we should realise that social hierarchy in a socialist system cannot be 'verified' by the application of the same measurement which was used to classify people in capitalist systems – mainly financial affluence and class belonging. Nevertheless, just as in any other system, the socialist state has its winners and losers – albeit the privileged group therein was not defined by money, but rather by access to goods and the redistribution system. Under socialist regimes, the possession of money itself was not crucial. On the contrary – it could have been even regarded as incriminating and potentially dangerous (as was, for example, education during the Cultural Revolution in China), as it could lead to someone being labelled as a bourgeoisie, which in the most orthodox stage of socialism equalled an enemy of the people. Moreover, money as such did not have a great deal of purchasing power in a society where practically everything, from essential food products to shoes, soap and toilet paper was rationalised. The great paradox was that, for example, in socialist Poland, many people had money (not meaning the ownership of 'fortune' of course), but nothing to buy with it (Lavigne, 1999).

To explain inequalities in 'equal' socialist societies, we must move beyond the class analysis of Marx (2010) and Weber (2009), as well as the assumption of classless societies of the socialist state, towards the more dynamic approach of Bourdieu (1986), who – being critical of the concept based on economism only – proposed an alternative approach of presenting the diversity of social stratification which deter-

mines opportunities and life chances. He expanded the concept of capital, adding cultural (education, know-how), social (membership, networks, connections) and symbolic (looks, gender, age, commonly referred to as 'prestige') capitals to economic (income, material status) capital. These different forms of capital "play different roles in shaping social structures in different social formations" (Eyal et al., 1998: 20). While in a capitalist state economic capital (ownership of capital and other goods) is of primary importance (accompanied by cultural or social capitals, depending on the country), in a socialist one it can be – as mentioned before – regarded as a disadvantage. In a socialist state, it is social capital, usually understood as party membership, which matters most. This is precisely how the socialist state 'creates' a ranking system, which depends on one's position relative to the system of redistribution and hence access to goods and benefits. Those who were closest to that system, labelled by Djilas (1982) as a 'new class' – in other words, those who controlled the redistribution of goods – were the biggest winners in the socialist state. In that way, despite the ideological egalitarianism of Marxism, the "Soviet-type countries had produced a bureaucratic elite class that exploited rather than served the working class" (Bian and Logan, 1996: 739), even though salaries per se did not vary significantly between different ranks.

The situation in socialist China under the Mao Zedong regime was not significantly different. As mentioned by Whyte (2012), the inequalities in China before Deng Xiaoping's opening reforms of 1978 were "organised more in terms of local variations in organisational affiliation and rank, rather than via differential incomes and property that translated into class differences in purchases and lifestyles" (p. 230). Again, the 'superficial' equality in economic capi-

tal has hidden the less obvious, but no less significant, disproportion to the resources that were much more valuable in a socialist state than money itself. However, what should be emphasised while analysing the case of socialist China and social stratification is not only the role and access to the most lucrative institution of the Communist Party, but also the aim of Mao's vision of a planned economy and the concept of rapid industrialisation in order to surpass the production levels of the most advanced capitalist societies. While the importance of the heavy industry sector can be traced in every socialist state economy, it would probably not be an exaggeration to say that nowhere has it surpassed that of China – and probably nowhere has it brought effects as disastrous as after the Great Leap Forward campaign, which coincided with natural disasters, causing famine and the deaths of millions of people (Yang, 1996).

What is more, because of the unrealistic vision of Mao, the socialist state's division into those 'in command', namely the nomenclature, and 'ordinary' workers, had to be additionally reinforced by a rank of production units (Wang, 2008). The salary of every worker was predetermined and assigned by the government and relatively equal for each position and each factory. However, investment and state support for a particular production unit (which could directly translate to higher bonuses, better housing and other privileges such as healthcare) depended mainly on the importance of the particular factory to the plan of the government. Putting it simply – the more crucial to fulfilling the Party plan a particular industry was, the more subsidies and investment it received, thus enabling it to provide much better standards for workers.

Although disproportion between working units in urban China certainly existed, there is hardly a comparison with the in-

equalities between the urban and rural areas. During the period of the Cultural Revolution, not only did Chinese from rural areas not receive wages (but simply points for their labour) nor were they entitled to the same number of benefits as urban Chinese (e.g. retirement plan), but they were also practically tethered to their birthplace and deprived of the possibility to migrate to the city in order to find paid employment (Unger, 2002). Migration to urban areas was under strict control (especially after the disastrous Great Leap Forward campaign in 1958-1961) thanks to the *hukou* system – a household registration which essentially tied one to the place in which he/she was born, as it was inherited from one's parents (Liu, 2005). However, the rural/urban *hukou* was not the only 'inherited' label in socialist China, nevertheless probably remaining the one with the longest-lasting consequences. Also, the pre-revolutionary past (whether authentic or fabricated) of being a 'landlord' or 'rich peasant', not in use in China before 1949 and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, replaced the traditional kinship group affiliation (Kuhn, 1984) and began to influence the lives of the following generations – the grandson of the landlord was, at that time, still considered to be a landlord and a potential threat to a 'socialist future'. Such an inborn status and all the associated benefits (in the case of urban *hukou* and better access to the redistributive system) or punishments (rural *hukou* or 'bourgeois' descent) contrasted with the late imperial and republican period, when "there were few legal or other impediments to social and geographical mobility" (Whyte, 2010: 14). It was, obviously, extremely challenging to climb the ladder of social stratification, but – at least in theory, primarily via the imperial examination system (Elman, 2000) or trading and market competition (Chow, 1966) – not impossible. The position of one's birth

did not mandate the future of the particular person – just as the poor might have climbed the social ladder, so could the rich fall, as there was no “legal claim and aristocratic pedigree” (Whyte, 2010: 15) which could have prevented such a fall.

1.2. Social stratification in the post-socialist state

The transition to post-socialism has, as mentioned above, caused many changes in the social structure and social order (Kocka, 2016; Pilc, 2017). The emergence of a capitalist market led to the formation of ‘officially’ stratified society (Máté et al., 2019). With such a complete change of reality, it seems logical to assume that some people benefited, and some suffered losses. According to Eyal et al. (1998), the biggest winners of the transition were those who possessed more than one form of capital and who could ‘transform’ a less beneficial one into that which was most desired.

In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the transition from socialism to capitalism came hand in hand with the transition to democracy, which at least guaranteed relative control over the possession of power. The collapse of socialist governments there and rapid privatisation altered the importance of social capital. In other words, being a ‘communist’ – which was understood more as belonging to the Party rather than through one’s ideology and values – ceased to be a pass to upward mobility. It was cultural capital that mattered the most in the win-lose game of systems transition. Education, experience and know-how, especially in the industrial and financial fields, become the most valuable assets one could have – without that capital, the new system and the new state could not have emerged and functioned properly. From then on, the importance of economic capital gradually started to

grow, becoming desirable and ‘useful’, as, after the transition to the market economy, there were actually products and services available. All one needed was money. In the case of Eastern Europe, where the end of the socialist state meant condemnation and negation of the socialist past, the biggest winners were a group of managers of critical industrial companies and enterprises, whose cultural capital was higher than social capital – in other words, those who did not hold a ‘political’ career before the transformation (Eyal et al., 1998).

The transition from a centrally planned to a free-market economy in China has, however, followed different steps. First of all, the changes did not take the form of a ‘big bang’ of ‘overnight’ rapid privatisation as it did in the case of Eastern Europe (Eyal et al., 1998). China has followed a more cautious method, which Deng Xiaoping, the architect of the opening reforms of 1978, described metaphorically as ‘crossing the river by feeling the stones’. What is even more important is the fact that the changes and the entire transition happened in the spirit of socialism. China has never officially ‘given up’ the pursuit of communism. For some time, the necessity of introducing open market reforms was even explained with the linear model of society development theorised by Marx. According to him, each society will have to go through the ‘phase’ of slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism in order to reach the ‘ideal stage’ of communism. In referring to this ideology, Chinese leaders attempted to justify the right of some people “to get rich before the others” (Deng, 1987) as a necessary step to make a Chinese communist future possible, so as not to avoid the capitalist step which is, according to Marxism, essential to further development leading to socialism and in the end to communism (Whyte, 2010).

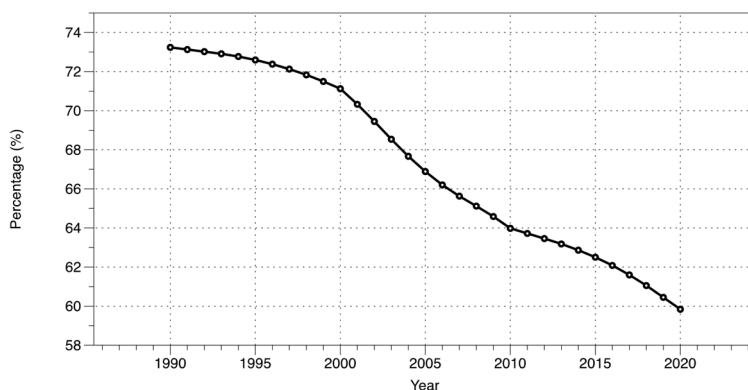
While in Europe the communist leaders were the biggest losers of the transformation, in China the transition to the market economy not only happened under Chinese Communist Party control, but also served as a legitimatising tool for the party's absolute power, maintaining its 'authoritarian resilience' as the only player in the field (Nathan, 2017), and recently consolidating power on an unprecedented scale in the hands of Xi Jinping (Brown, 2016), the leader and the president of the People's Republic of China, making a "return to a personalistic dictatorship after decades of institutionalised collective leadership" (Shirk, 2018: 22).

1.3. Women in post-socialist China

The question that should now be asked is where these win-lose games place women, in order to 'evaluate' the 'gendered' costs of transition from the centrally planned economy to the market economy. LaFont

(2001) mentions that the shift, despite its positive outcomes, resulted in increased unemployment, inflation and insecurity. Income disparities widened (Appleton et al., 2014), benefits were taken away, and the 'patronising' hand of the state diminished. LaFont (2001) argues that "post-communist women have been disproportionately disadvantaged" (p. 204). Similarly, by analysing the situation of Chinese women in the post-reform era, Zheng (2003) claims that, in this new reality in which "freedom of mobility joins freedom of discrimination, and opportunities blend with insecurity" (p. 167), "the losses suffered by women workers have been the greatest" (p.164). According to data from the World Bank, the number of women doing paid work fell significantly from 73% in 1991 to 59.8% in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). What is more, this number would have been even lower if women doing part-time and temporary jobs had been excluded from the equation (Table 2, Figure 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Female labour force participation



Source: World Bank (2020). Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population aged 15+) (modelled ILO estimate). Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/sl.tlf.cact.fe.zs?locations=CN0-CN>

Taking into consideration the fact that in socialist states women did participate in the labour market in numbers unknown in Western societies, but randomly occupied

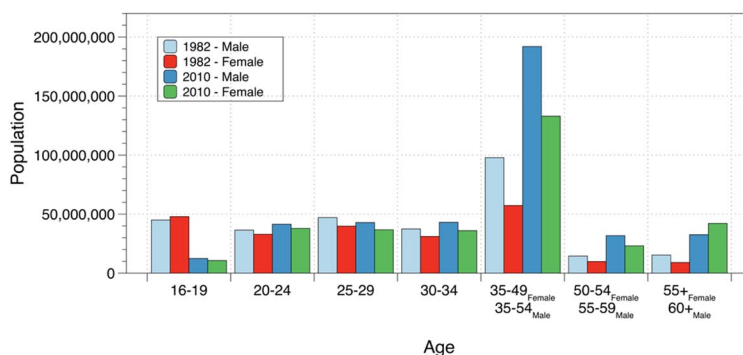
high, managerial or political positions, we can assume that they were not in the group of the biggest winners of social changes. Similarly, in China, women were signifi-

cantly misrepresented in the group of those who benefit the most – the highest-ranking Party officials. As mentioned by Whyte (1984), there was only one female minister in Mao's China (out of 37) – surprisingly enough, it was Chen Muhua, who later became an official advocate of the one-child policy. Not much has changed in this aspect – after Xi Jinping's rise to power, there is still only one woman (out of 25 members) in the Politburo (State Council, 2020).

As the state-owned enterprises started to undergo the process of privatisation or ended up in bankruptcy because of their inefficiency, the massive reduction of the labour force was inevitable. The most crucial role of the new firms was to generate profits, which could then be reinvested. The majority of the newly unemployed

were women, who were considered an unnecessary cost as they rarely performed jobs crucial to the production process itself. According to Zheng (2003) who cited *Zhongguo Funü Bao* (China's Women News), women accounted for 62.8% of 11.51 million of the workers made redundant in 1997. While in 1994 there were over 24 million women employed in the manufacturing sector (which employed the most significant number of female workers), in 1999 that number dropped to 15.5 million. What shows the gravity of the situation even more is the fact that in 1999 women constituted only 38% of the national workforce – a number that drops even further to less than 30% if we consider only women in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2000).

Figure 2. Labour market participation according to age and sex



Source: Tabulation on the 2010 Population census...2010; Population Census of China, 1982.

Moreover, the hand of the socialist state, which guaranteed employment, as well as free healthcare, education and childcare facilities, retreated, leaving people's fates in their own hands. Many women who lost their jobs had spent their entire lives under the communist regime, were not educated and did not know how to 'reinvent' themselves in the new reality. Because the retirement age was very low in the socialist state (usually 60 years old for men and 55 for

women), many of those who were made redundant and were not able to find a new job chose the option of early retirement, especially since age was not associated with valued experience in the new reality, but rather with unvalued seniority (Wang, 2008).

Although female participation in the labour market in post-reform China is still relatively high (even though it is constantly declining), women are facing the similar problem of the glass ceiling, which 'limits'

their career options to less prestigious and lower-paid jobs (Liu, 2013). Women are not only denied access to the most lucrative positions and are often openly discriminated against in job advertisements of all levels (Human Rights Watch, 2018), but also receive lower wages compared to men occupying the same position (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007; Golley et al., 2019), earning 67.3% of the wages of a man in urban areas (Report on the Major Results of the Third Wave Survey on The Social Status of Women in China, 2011). And all of this is happening while women university graduates outnumber their male counterparts (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2014).

Despite these disadvantages, Fong (2002) seems to argue that the glass ceiling is to some extent compensated for by the glass floor - that is, the preference for hiring women in the relatively newly developing services sector. Because of that, she argues, even though women have minimal chances to reach the top, they are also less likely to be at the very bottom (that is, unemployed). It is, however, debatable whether getting 'stuck' in a low paid job can be perceived as an advantage. Moreover, it seems that opportunities for jobs in the services sector are highly dependent on both age and looks and are being referred to as the 'rice bowl of youth' (Hanser, 2005; Zhang, 2000 making an association with the concept of the iron bowl of rice – a term used to describe stable employment in socialist China (in socialist Poland, for example, the same security of employment was referred to with the saying „down you lie, or up you stand, either way, you will earn two grand”). Although these new tendencies do create some temporary opportunities for young women, at the same time they tend to limit the „employment access of older laid-off women workers and [reinforce] gender stereotypes” (Zheng, 2003: 174).

Women in the post-socialist states are not only denied access to top jobs but are also almost entirely absent from political life (just as in the socialist period). Fuszara (2000) focuses on the situation of women in post-communist Poland, arguing that „the poor representation of women and women's issues in Polish political life is a result of men's dominance in party politics” (p. 260). The lack of women in state politics and government can be directly translated to their absence in the policy-making processes, which tend to go in the direction of familism rather than taking the needs of women into consideration. One of the examples here is the issue of maternity leave (Kamerman and Moss, 2009). On the surface, the policy of extended maternity leave seems to be beneficial for women, who are supposed to be able to return to their work after the given period of leave. However, with a more in-depth examination, this policy not only classifies women as the primary child carer (labelling them as less reliable and flexible workers, hence not suitable for the highest and most demanding positions) but also limits the chances of employment of young women, who are discriminated against in the labour market (Lewandowska-Gwarda, 2018; Murawska, 2016; Bieszk-Stolorz, 2017; Dmytrów, & Bieszk-Stolorz, 2019).

One of the state's strategies to cope with the uneasiness of the post-socialist transition is “promoting patriotism and nationalist sentiments (...) to inspire national confidence during periods of political and economic upheaval” (LaFont, 2001: 212). One of the tools in promoting such patriotic feeling was the glorification of the pre-socialist social order and the traditional role of women as mothers that was typical thereof. In China, such a glorification of traditionally understood 'femininity' is reinforced by Confucianist traditions and values, which are being 'hijacked' to fit

the Party's narrative of the shift to the neo-liberal self-reliance of the individual under the 'cover' of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Huang, 2008), conveniently forgetting that Confucianism at its core is based on a collective paradigm. This has been most clearly shown in the speech by Xi Jinping given to the new leading body of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), the official and state-sponsored organ responsible for promoting women's rights, as he said:

"Special attention should be paid to women's unique role in propagating Chinese family virtues and setting up a good family tradition. This relates to harmony in the family and in society and to the healthy development of children. Women should consciously shoulder the responsibilities of taking care of the old and young, as well as educating children" (Xi, 2013).

As observed by Attané (2012), "in a labour market that has become highly competitive, the work of Chinese women serves, as elsewhere, as an adjustment variable. When jobs are scarce, family arbitration usually favours the man's job and sacrifices that of the woman, whose contribution to the family income is generally secondary. Women therefore find themselves in competition with men for jobs twice over, once on the labour market and again within the home" (p.10). However, Chinese women are facing disadvantages not only within families and the market economy, but also from the state and Party officials who are "urging them to focus on domestic life" (Qin, 2019).

While the post-reform Chinese state has focused on limiting rather than increasing birth rates by means of the introduction of the top-down implemented one-child policy (now relaxing it because of all the problems this social experiment has created), it should be mentioned that the

reformist wing of the Party blamed female participation in the labour market for the inefficiency of the collective economy, however, forgetting that it was the state which, despite promoting gender equality, at the same time promoted gendered job assignments, dissuading women from technical and skilled positions and pushing them towards cleaning and assistance services (Hershatter, 2007). In other words, "gendered training and job assignment in the socialist planned economy provided the foundations for widening gender disparities in the reform era" (Zheng, 2003: 166). Considered to be an obstacle to the effectiveness and development of the economy, in the 1980s the return of women to their traditional role (staying at home) was popularised in official journals and newspapers, and it continues to gain social approval. Data gathered by the All-China Women's Federation and NBS (National Bureau of Statistics) shows that the traditional idea of 'the man lives outside, the woman lives inside' in 2010 had the support of 61.6% of men and 54.8% of women (Fincher, 2014). However, as pointed out by Zheng (2003):

"The Communist Party built its legitimacy in part on its self-proclaimed role as liberator of Chinese women. In other words, maintaining the image of the liberator of women has been a pillar in maintaining the legitimacy of party rule. Just as the party could not openly abandon Marxism, it was hardly free to abandon the powerful signifier of modernity and socialism-gender equality" (p. 169).

It also seems that 'sending women home' would have conflicted with what we know in the West as the one-child policy. Promoting it as a tool to liberate women from the burden of multiple childbirth, while at the same time denying access to the opportunities of the newly emerging market,

could have sent a mixed message (Zheng, 2016). This complexity and ambiguity of the political reality in China, with its open market, competitiveness and inequalities typical of a capitalist state and, at the same time, the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party whose highest members benefit from this hybrid system under the cover of promoting socialism and all of its values, makes the analysis of the policies with clear gendered implications complex and complicated. With a small group of leaders who, in the words of Tilly (1999), are hoarding opportunities by "creating beliefs and practices that sustain their control" (p.91), Chinese women are subjected to policies which, instead of promoting equality, legitimise the absolute rule of the Party and the objectification of Chinese women and their roles according to the economic and developmental needs of the ruling Party. As pointed out by Zheng (2003):

"Age, education, geographic location, residence (rural or urban), enterprise ownership form, type of industry, skills, capital and network resources are all important variables that intersect with gender in differentiating women in the turbulent social and economic transformations that are reshaping China. Differentiation and diversification among women, however, do not reduce the salience of gender. Rather, the reform era has brought accelerated gender discrimination and gender conflicts" (p.182).

The post-reform era in China has, as mentioned by Whyte (2010), caused the average Chinese to gain more in comparison to other societies, as well as in comparison to the Maoist era. Nevertheless, it is important to note that "the problem with such statements is that not all Chinese are average" (Whyte, 2010: 31). From a gender perspective, this reflection should be

probably specified by saying that not every Chinese woman is an average Chinese.

Table 2. Labour market participation according to age, sex and occupation.

	Total		Government Officials, Party Leadership and Corporate Officers		Vocational, Specialists and Technical Personnel		Office workers		Sales, Business and Commerce Workers		Farmers and other pri- mary sector workers		Factory Workers		Other	
	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010	1982	2010
Male	293,661,280	395,972,820	7,286,564	9,497,860	16,331,847	23,910,160	5,127,143	20,724,990	11,086,913	55,844,970	199,722,672	175,542,880	53,836,871	110,016,950	267,270	434,910
Female	227,844,338	319,507,070	844,223	3,185,550	10,125,671	24,995,250	1,661,204	10,206,850	9,832,189	59,879,930	175,657,806	170,111,410	29,532,173	50,860,390	191,072	260,690
General Population	521,505,618	715,479,890	8,130,787	12,686,410	26,457,518	48,909,410	6,788,347	30,931,840	20,921,102	115,724,900	375,380,478	345,654,390	83,369,044	160,877,340	458,342	695,600
Age	Male															
	Female															
16-19	45,012,206	12,403,550	4,889	24,640	609,666	209,380	253,615	252,010	1,056,062	1,831,900	35,922,305	5,677,470	7,083,090	4,395,130	82,579	13,040
20-24	36,427,362	41,431,560	56,245	325,530	1,790,740	2,051,340	572,798	1,683,310	1,357,954	7,155,960	23,047,475	14,837,450	9,539,136	15,332,820	63,014	45,150
25-29	47,073,854	42,809,160	300,571	850,470	2,925,111	3,896,580	794,775	2,555,970	1,642,743	7,856,480	29,936,623	13,333,210	11,434,886	14,267,340	39,145	49,110
30-34	37,485,433	43,057,720	600,584	1,237,390	2,437,466	3,700,290	773,311	2,665,670	1,339,284	7,549,070	23,928,372	13,670,870	8,384,550	14,185,130	21,866	49,300
35-54	97,837,464	191,933,610	5,408,139	6,151,710	7,644,650	12,044,240	2,438,344	11,099,290	3,892,119	26,807,300	63,074,261	80,571,350	15,332,303	55,032,510	47,648	227,210
55-59	14,512,662	31,770,060	670,170	699,870	550,597	1,456,410	201,620	1,745,150	792,889	2,886,950	11,100,345	20,136,520	1,191,017	4,814,080	6,024	31,080
60+	15,312,299	32,567,160	245,966	208,250	373,617	551,940	92,680	723,590	1,007,862	1,757,310	12,713,291	27,316,110	871,889	1,989,940	6,994	20,020
Age	Female															
	Male															
16-19	47,906,811	10,697,270	2,641	17,030	710,388	326,600	109,744	142,040	1,252,103	2,263,810	39,935,246	4,741,350	5,826,993	3,197,810	69,696	8,630
20-24	32,956,847	37,882,130	20,521	214,480	1,718,232	3,110,110	261,510	1,468,220	1,680,135	9,015,880	22,861,410	15,351,140	6,389,786	8,662,140	45,253	30,160
25-29	39,783,904	36,726,380	80,251	456,800	2,308,114	4,900,280	380,936	2,032,910	1,781,028	8,740,100	29,139,046	13,755,220	6,063,937	6,808,230	30,592	30,840
30-34	31,093,464	35,993,580	97,548	533,620	1,628,088	4,490,460	267,648	1,665,620	1,342,293	8,387,300	23,692,314	14,092,180	4,048,844	6,790,580	16,729	33,820
35-49	57,296,090	132,916,020	455,644	1,673,090	3,394,958	10,554,270	548,637	4,231,440	2,838,082	26,283,000	43,749,401	67,771,300	6,286,986	22,269,440	22,382	127,480
50-54	9,816,331	23,165,300	120,009	179,270	254,215	1,139,460	66,756	451,150	434,676	2,700,560	8,369,038	16,990,040	568,680	1,690,440	2,957	14,380
55+	8,990,891	42,126,390	67,609	106,260	111,676	478,070	25,973	215,470	503,872	2,489,280	7,911,351	37,410,180	366,947	1,411,750	3,463	15,380

Source: Tabulation on the 2010 Population Census... 2010; Population Census of China, 1982

2. Methodology

This paper's main aim is to propose a theoretical framework which will allow a more in-depth analysis of gender inequality in post-reform China, in which gender is treated as a socially constructed and always-present constraint 'done' in the process of creating the self as contextually credible (Butler, 2004) and which acknowledges that substantial social change cannot be 'compressed' by the usage of standardisation, which attempts to explain the differences that exist in the population through the concept of the "variance of other variables" (Preston, 1978: 301-302). It argues for the need to 'move' towards the interpretivist paradigm and post-structural analysis, not because of the importance of understanding certain behaviours as structurally linked and 'measurable' – for example, the preference in China for sons because of their roles in prolonging a family line – but because of the importance of understanding the meaning which is behind these behaviours (Riley, 1999: 388). It proposes a framework of discourse analysis, highlighting the ways in which forces of the state, culture and the market 'shape' the understanding of gender inequalities in China, using (or 'hijacking') the discourses both to popularise and boost the acceptance of the existing inequalities, as well as mandate the power of the leadership elite, creating socially constructed myths which are gaining importance and being continuously reinforced and internalised.

As such, this research is mainly based on a revision of existing literature on the situation of Chinese women and the specificities of the situation in China due to its peculiar way of opening up to the market economy while maintaining the dominance of the one-party rule and the implementation of top-down policies, discourses and the 'evaluation' of existing feminist theo-

ries and their 'adaptation' to the research focus.

Even though it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning that the suggested theoretical framework (reinforced with the life-course perspective) was applied in the author's study (Nowak, 2017) of the gender analysis of the one-child policy and its impact on gender inequalities in China, using the method of in-depth semi-structured interviews with Chinese women (from different socio-economic backgrounds, ages, family and caring duties) of urban areas of Guangdong province, focusing on the popular 'assumption' of the effects of family planning policy and women's perspective thereon. A total of 27 in-depth interviews focused on four themes of education and employment, family and intimate relations, care and childbearing and body politics were held, deconstructing the myths regarding family planning and its effect on women's situation in China, demonstrating that the proposed framework can serve as a tool for a deeper understanding of the issue, showcasing the 'reasons' for constant existence and reinforcement of the existing inequalities.

3. Discussion

As Robert Holton (2014) observed, inequalities are "generated within society, not simply within the economy" (p.9). From a feminist perspective, it becomes clear that economic capital cannot be assumed to be the only reason for the oppression of women, due to the fallacy of Marxist feminism theories. Attracted by the ideas of the socialist state, which was supposed to promote equality for all and in which one of the tools for achieving an egalitarian society was the quest for the liberation of women, Marxist feminists believed that capitalism and patriarchy are co-dependent and op-

erate together (Millet, 2016). They thought that the destruction of the former would automatically destroy the other. Socialism was seen as the only 'tool' needed to achieve equality for women. However, despite the trite slogans, such as "women on the tractors" in socialist Poland and Mao's famous claim about women holding up half the sky in China, it seems that the socialist state did not manage to achieve the gender equality it promised. Building on that, socialist feminists, who also blamed capitalism for the oppression of women, have pointed out that socialism itself will not solve the problem, because patriarchy operates despite the system. What is needed, then, is not only the abolishment of capitalism, but also the devaluation of patriarchy (Tong, 2013).

Although even Mao Zedong himself admitted that "despite collective work, egalitarian legislation, social care of children, etc., it was too soon for the Chinese really, deeply, and irrevocably to have changed their attitudes toward women" (Mitchell, 1974: 416), Marxist and socialist feminism cannot be forgotten entirely in the context of China. In the end, Marxism (in the form of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought) is still officially the dominant ideology in China, despite the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping. It is even more so, as despite its 'shortcomings', the 'revolutionary stage' in Chinese history, and especially the New Marriage Law of 1950, replaced in 1980 by the Second Marriage Law (Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, 2011), brought an enormous shift and positive change in women's lives, among other things raising the minimum marriageable age, forbidding arranged marriages and opening educational and professional possibilities for women – and at least acknowledging that the 'double shift' (professional work and housework) was a problem. In her study on socialism

and feminism in China, Croll (2011) observed how the Communist Party of China, while supporting women in their quest to gain economic independence, never placed the feminist narratives above nationalism or the Party's goals. The burden of the 'double shift' was acknowledged – which is essential – but not much has been done about it, as it never became a priority, and its burden has been carried by Chinese women alone (Hershatter, 2014). The 'fake' importance of the matter of women in the socialist state can be summarised in an example of bitter humour by stating the fact that these states had the resources to fund the space race, yet were not able to satisfy the basic, biological needs of women by providing, among other things, sanitary pads (Drakulic, 2016) or essential equipment that could aid housework, such as refrigerators and washing machines.

Even though specific measures were taken in order to change the position and disadvantaged situation women were facing, they were limited to the public sphere only, and women suffered from being "doubly exploited (...) in their roles as producers and reproducers" (LaFont, 2001: 205). Although women have entered the labour market (not always voluntarily), and occasionally took jobs in the fields typically 'reserved' for men (such as engineering), they encountered discrimination and faced inequalities, as they were denied the highest positions and were largely overlooked in the system of promotions, bonuses and wages rates. Although in the period before the Great Leap Forward communes were responsible for taking care of every single aspect of people's lives, reality was not as perfect as it may have seemed. Despite the emergence of the commune canteens, women still prepared some meals at home, were responsible for sewing and washing clothes, not to mention grocery shopping, which – with the rationalisation and con-

stant shortage of goods – become a tedious and excessively time-consuming task. What is more, if we take into account the six-day work week, the lack of any facilities and compulsory participation in political and awareness-raising meetings (Whyte, 1984), we can easily see that allowing women to enter the labour market on the same principles that men did and socialising housework (although only transiently and in a somewhat mishandled way) did not relieve women from their domestic labour, but only devalued its worth (Hershatter, 2007) and brought about the additional “burden” of mandatory employment. However, it is important to note that the burden of the second shift, even if only theoretically, was finally publicly acknowledged. However, as mentioned before, it did not solve the problem of gender inequality. Under closer examination it can be seen that the ‘issue’ of women in the socialist state, just as many other ideas (in both socialist and capitalist states), has been ‘hijacked’ and used to justify the domination of those who are in power, creating discourses which legitimise their domination and make it possible to keep reproducing the relationship between authority, power and control. Zhang Yue, the host of a cancelled talk show which focused on women’s issues, mentioned that the aim of Chinese women since the end of the Qing dynasty was to achieve the abolishment of the tradition of foot binding, access to education, freedom in choosing a marriage partner, access to the labour force and gender equality. She has said that “we got the first four. But not the last one” (Holding Up Half the Sky, 2012).

Official Marxist ideology and the market economy make China’s situation more complicated, as to a certain extent we are dealing with a hybrid of socialist and capitalist states, in which women become associated more with consumption rather

than production (Croll, 2011) and in which they see their mothers’ past, despite achievements in the field of gender equality, as privation (Rofel, 2007). Furthermore, it is precisely this complexity that means that Marxist and socialist feminism are “not sufficient” when applied to any research on gender inequalities in China, as for the equation of the dual system of gender oppression – the culture (patriarchy) and market economy (capitalism) – we need to add the element of the state with its top-down implementation of policies, among other things. This is because, in the case of China, all three systems – patriarchal culture, the free market economy and the authoritarian state – have the power to create discourses (another example would be the discourse of the so-called leftover women who are not married at a certain age as a threat to social harmony) which have ‘normalising powers’ and which “are constructed and maintained by granting normality, rationality and naturalness” (Davis and Gannon, 2005: 318), making people believe and want to pursue these concrete ways of being, without even considering the ‘origins’ of those convictions. However, and crucially, these discourses can also be challenged and resisted. This means that all these factors are changeable, and they sometimes reinforce and sometimes exclude one another, which translates to the fact that no form of power belongs constantly and unchangeably to a particular group or particular gender. Power here should be understood not in the hierarchical way, but rather according to the Foucauldian interpretation with its omnipresence and changeability (Foucault, 1980), as it points to the importance of diversity and the mistake of generalising claims of the undeniable link between certain factors, such as education, lower fertility and the better position of women, without taking into consideration

the cultural context of a given society. It is interesting to note that this understanding of power is, to a certain extent, similar to the concept of power of the sovereign in Confucianist thought – the ‘perfect’ ruler is not the one whom people fear the most, but the one whose rule is not seen to be imposed, and is considered to be best for the people, who obey it thinking that it is their own ‘choice’ to do so.

This renders the application of post-structural feminism with its attention to culture, social construction of gender, power, conflict, representation and language (Barker, 2012) indispensable – because, as already highlighted many times, what is needed is to challenge, verify and deconstruct the myths created by the ‘naturalising discourses’, without which those myths will remain ‘in force’, putting existing problems in the shade and not really going into the complex reasons for their constant existence and reinforcement. It must be kept in mind that the current gender inequalities are all ‘underpinned’ by the way in which gender is ‘carved’ into all social, cultural, political and economic systems, and that these systems are changeable and constantly work together to ‘create’ our social reality.

Keeping in mind that socialist feminism cannot be omitted entirely in the case of research on China, it is essential to highlight that as with feminism, post-structuralism is also not a uniform theory, but aims to highlight the inadequacy of structural approaches to the analysis of gender inequality, in which a “single solution on issues like childcare, social security, and housing, can’t be adequate for all” (Fraser and Nicholson, 1994: 259). Because of that, one should bear in mind feminist post-structural theories rather than one definite theory. Among these theories are some which, even though they reject materialist inequalities as the only reason for

the oppression of women, somehow come ‘closer’ to structural analysis in the sense of emphasising redistributive injustice as a large part of the construction of social inequalities – Beck’s (1992) risk society theory and Foucault’s (1982) analysis of power-knowledge are still focused on concrete, rather than abstract, concepts.

Conclusions

The discussion of the welfare state and its role in achieving gender equality (or in deepening the disadvantaged position of women) has always been present in feminist scholarship, as it was believed that “disadvantages faced by women require collective, political solutions” (Bryson, 2007: 83). It has already been mentioned that feminist analysis is not homogenous, and we should discuss feminist theories rather than one unified theory. Hence, as in the case of reasons for the oppression of women and possible ways of overcoming it, the role of the welfare state in different feminist analysis varies. As stated by Hunter (2012), each of the feminist theories is “concerned in different ways about women’s equality, their agency, gender relations, and social justice and how these are achieved, enabled, or hindered through the arrangement of welfare” (p. 83).

The situation of China is complex because it is a ‘hybrid’ of a socialist state and a free market economy. For that reason – and because of the insufficiency of socialist feminism – the discourses created by the forces of patriarchal culture, the market economy and the state with its top-down policy implementation should be the ‘background’ for the process of analysing data. The author firmly believes that only by understanding the perspective of those who are subjugated to their reality, learning about their problems and needs, can there be better alternatives for the future. Without this, we are ‘doomed’ to continue

repeating the same mistakes, just dressed in different forms and with increasingly 'rationalised' justification. It would be hard to find a better example than the issue of the preference of the sex of babies in China. It is incredible how both in the Western world, as well as in China, the discourse that the situation of women in China has improved since there is now a preference for the only child to be a baby girl (until very recently in China it was always a boy) has been internalised. However, if one 'digs' slightly deeper, it turns out that the preference for girls now is based on the belief that they will be better carers for their parents in the future, which is translating into losses in terms of professional, social and economic opportunities and poses a significant burden to the 'preferred' girls.

The proposed theoretical framework is a starting point for the deconstruction of the popular myths related to gender inequalities in the complex reality of modern China. However, as with any research, it faces certain limitations. It is evident that the research already focused on the gender issues which chooses the feminist theoretical framework assumes that women are somehow misrepresented, mistreated or neglected in light of the studied phenomena. What is more, the framework that attempts to break from structural analysis is prone to the critique of turning into particularities and an individualist approach which focuses on differences rather than on the group of women as a whole. However, as mentioned before, the post-structural approach to research on gender inequalities is not a unified theory and does not neglect the causal theories, but instead offers a more in-depth approach to understanding them in their continually evolving forms.

Another limitation of this paper, and, at the same time a suggestion for further research, is that it proposes a very general framework for such a large and differenti-

ated country as China. It is essential to continue the work on understanding the impact of gender inequalities and needs on more specific 'groups', depending on, for example, age or geographical location (there is a massive disproportion between urban and rural women in China) and/or on ethnic minorities (there are 55 officially recognised minorities in mainland China). Another interesting follow-up to this research would be a study on the influence of gender inequalities on Chinese men – a part of gender studies that is often 'neglected' (although it is worth mentioning that men's studies are gaining importance) as the majority of the studies focus on the unprivileged situation of women, which does not, however, imply that men are always the 'winners'. In the end, if we aim for (gender) equality, it is never really about winning, but rather about playing together and playing fair.

References

- Appleton, S., Song, L., Xia, Q. (2014), Understanding urban wage inequality in China 1988-2008: Evidence from quantile analysis, *World Development* 62, 1-13. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.04.005.
- Attané, I. (2012), Being a woman in China today: A demography of gender, *China Perspectives*, 4, 5-15. DOI: 10.4000/chin perspectives.6013
- Barker, C. (2012), *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*, London: Sage.
- Beck, U. (1992), *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*, London: Sage.
- Bian, Y., Logan, J.R. (1996), Market transition and the persistence of power: the changing stratification system in urban China, *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 739-758. DOI: 10.2307/2096451
- Bieszk-Stolorz, B. (2017), The impact of gender on routes for registered unemployment exit in Poland, *Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy*, 12(4), 733-749. DOI: 10.24136/eq.v12i4.38

- Bobbitt-Zeher, D. (2007), The gender income gap and the role of education, *Sociology of Education*, 80(1), 1-22. DOI: 10.1177/003804070708000101
- Bourdieu, P. (1986), The forms of capital, in: I. Szeman and T. Kaposy, (Eds.), *Cultural theory: An anthology* (pp. 81-93), Chichester and Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brown, K. (2016), *CEO, China: the rise of Xi Jinping*, London and New York: IB Tauris.
- Bryson, V. (2007), *Gender and the politics of time: Feminist theory and contemporary debates*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Butler, J. (2004), *Undoing gender*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Chen, M. (2018), Does marrying well count more than career? Personal achievement, marriage, and happiness of married women in urban China, *Chinese Sociological Review*, 50(3): 240-274. DOI: 10.1080/21620555.2018.1435265
- Chow, Y. T., (1966), *Social Mobility in China. Status Careers Among the Gentry in a Chinese Community*, New York: Atherton Press.
- Croll, E. (2011), *Feminism and socialism in China*, Oxon and New York: Routledge Revivals.
- Davis, B., Gannon, S. (2005), *Feminism/ Poststructuralism*, in: B. Somekh and C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 318-325), London: Sage.
- Deng, X. (1987), *Fundamental issues in present-day China*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Djilas, M. (1982), *The new class: An analysis of the communist system*, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Dmytrów, K., Bieszk-Stolorz, B. (2019), Mutual relationships between the unemployment rate and the unemployment duration in the Visegrad Group countries in years 2001-2017, *Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy*, 14(1), 129-148. DOI: 10.24136/eq.2019.006
- Drakulic, S. (2016), *How we survived communism and even laughed*, New York: Harper Perennial.
- Dunn, J. (1984), *The politics of socialism: An essay in political theory*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elman, B.A. (2000), *A cultural history of civil examinations in late imperial China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Eyal, G., Szelényi, I., Townsley, E.R. (1998), *Making capitalism without capitalists: Class formation and elite struggles in post-communist Central Europe*, London and New York: Verso.
- Fincher, L.H. (2014), *Leftover women. The resurgence of gender inequality in China*, London: Zed Books.
- Flaherty, J.H., Liu, M.L., Ding, L., Dong, B., Ding, Q., Li, X., Xiao, S. (2007), China: The aging giant, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 55(8), 1295-1300. DOI: 10.1111/j.1532-5415.2007.01273.x
- FlorCruz, J. (2008), Looking back over China's last 30 years. CNN, 19 December 2008, retrieved from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/12/18/china.reform.florcruz/index.html?iref=24hours>, (accessed 22 March 2015).
- Fong, V.L. (2002), China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters, *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), 1098-1109. DOI: 10.1525/aa.2002.104.4.1098
- Foucault, M. (1980), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1982), The subject and power, *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795. DOI: 10.1086/448181
- Fraser, N., Nicholson, L. (1994), Social criticism without philosophy: An encounter between feminism and postmodernism, in: S. Seidman (Ed.), *The Postmodern turn: New perspectives on social theory* (pp. 242-261), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuszara, M. (2000), New gender relations in Poland in the 1990s, in: S. Gal and G. Kligman (Eds.), *Reproducing gender:*

- Politics, publics and everyday life after socialism (pp. 259-285), Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Glass, A.P., Gao, Y., Luo, J. (2013), China: Facing a long-term care challenge on an unprecedented scale, *Global Public Health*, 8(6), 725-738. DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2013.782060
- Golley, J., Zhou, Y., Wang, M. (2019), Inequality of opportunity in China's labor earnings: The gender dimension, *China & World Economy*, 27(1), 28-50. DOI: 10.1111/cwe.12266.
- Greenhalgh, S. (2010), *Cultivating global citizens: Population in the rise of China*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Hanser, A. (2005), The gendered rice bowl: The sexual politics of service work in urban China, *Gender & Society*, 19(5), 581-600. DOI: 10.1177/0891243205276794
- Hershatter, G. (2007), *Women in China's long twentieth century*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hershatter, G. (2014), *The gender of memory: Rural women and China's collective past*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Holding Up Half the Sky (2012), *The New York Times*, 6 March 2012, retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/world/asia/holding-up-half-the-sky.html?_r=1&, (accessed 12 April 2015).
- Holton, R.J. (2014), *Global inequalities*, London: Palgrave.
- Huang, Y. (2008), *Capitalism with Chinese characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the state*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Human Rights Watch (2018), Only men need apply. Gender discrimination in job advertisements in China, retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/04/23/only-men-need-apply/gender-discrimination-job-advertisements-china>, (accessed 14 August 2020).
- Hunter, S. (2012), Feminist Perspectives, in: P. Alcock, P., M. May and S. Wright (Eds.), *The student's companion to social policy* (pp. 83-89), Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jayachandran, S. (2015), The roots of gender inequality in developing countries, *Annual Review of Economics*, 7(1), 63-88. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-economics-080614-115404
- Kammerman, S., Moss, P. (2009), *The politics of parental leave policies: Children, parenting, gender and the labour market*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Kocka, J. (2016), *Capitalism: A short history*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Kuhn, P.A. (1984), Chinese views of social classification, in: J.L. Watson (Ed.), *Class and social stratification in post-revolution China* (pp. 16-28), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LaFont, S. (2001), One step forward, two steps back: Women in the post-communist states, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 34(2), 203-220. DOI: 10.1016/S0967-067X(01)00006-X
- Lane, D.S. (1996), *The rise and fall of state socialism: industrial society and the socialist state*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lavigne, M. (1999), *The economics of transition: from socialist economy to market economy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1007/978-1-349-27313-3
- Lewandowska-Gwarda, K. (2018), Female unemployment and its determinants in Poland in 2016 from the spatial perspective, *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 9(2), 183-204. DOI: 10.24136/oc.2018.010
- Liu, S. (2013), A few good women at the top: The China case, *Business Horizons*, 56(4), 483-490. DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2013.04.002
- Liu, Z. (2005), Institution and inequality: the hukou system in China, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 33(1), 133-157. DOI: 10.1016/j.jce.2004.11.001
- Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (2011), retrieved from: http://www.china.org.cn/china/Legislations-Form2001-2010/2011-02/11/content_21897930.htm, (accessed 15 September 2020)

- Marx, K. (2010), A contribution to the critique of political economy, in: J.F. Sitton (Ed.), Marx today: Selected works and recent debates (pp. 91-94), New York: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9780230117457
- Máté, D., Sadaf, R., Oláh, J., Popp, J., Szűcs, E. (2019), The effects of accountability, governance capital, and legal origin on reported frauds, *Technological and Economic Development of Economy*, 25(6), 1213-1231. <https://doi.org/10.3846/tede.2019.10717>
- Millett, K. (2016), *Sexual politics*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mitchell, J. (1974), *Psychoanalysis and feminism*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Murawska, A. (2016), Differences in unemployment among persons in a special situation on the labour market on the example of Polish provinces, *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 7(3), 375-388. DOI: 10.12775/OeC.2016.022
- Nathan, A.J. (2017), China's changing of the guard: Authoritarian resilience, in: K.E. Brodsgaard (Ed.), *Critical Readings on the Communist Party of China* (pp. 86-99), Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China (2000), retrieved from <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/yearly-data/YB2000e/index1.htm>, (accessed 7 April 2017).
- Naughton, B.J. (2018), *The Chinese economy: Adaptation and growth*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press.
- Nowak, M.K. (2017), Gender analysis of the one-child policy: the impact on gender inequalities in China, PhD thesis, (unpublished), Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, retrieved from: <https://theses.lib.polyu.edu.hk/handle/200/9087>, (accessed 12 August 2019).
- Park, J.D. (1997), *The special economic zones of China and their impact on its economic development*, Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Pilc, M. (2017), Cultural, political and economic roots of the labor market institutional framework in the OECD and post-socialist countries, *Equilibrium. Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy*, 12(4), 713-731. DOI: 10.24136/eq.v12i4.37
- Population Census of China (1982), *Population Census Office under the State Council and Department of Population Statistics*, Beijing: State Statistical Bureau.
- Preston, S.H. (1978), Mortality, morbidity, and development, *Population Bulletin of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia*, 15, 63-75.
- Qin, A. (2019), A prosperous China says 'men preferred,' and women lose, *New York Times*, 17 July 2019, retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/16/world/asia/china-women-discrimination.html>, (accessed 20 May 2020).
- Report on major results of the third wave survey on the social status of women in China (2011), All-China women's Federation and National Bureau of Statistics of China, retrieved from: http://www.china.com.cn/zhibo/zhuanli/ch-xinwen/2011-10/21/content_23687810.htm, (accessed 14 May 2016).
- Riley, N.E. (1999), Challenging demography: Contributions from feminist theory, *Sociological Forum*, 14(3), 369-397.
- Rofel, L. (2007), *Desiring China: Experiments in neoliberalism, sexuality, and public culture*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Shirk, S.L. (2018), China in Xi's 'New Era': The return to personalistic rule, *Journal of Democracy* 29(2), 22-36. DOI 10.1353/jod.2018.0022.
- Sicular, T., Ximing, Y., Gustafsson, B., Shi, L. (2007), The urban-rural income gap and inequality in China, *Review of Income and Wealth*, 53(1), 93-126. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4991.2007.00219.x
- State Council (2020), retrieved from: <http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil>, (accessed 10 September 2020).
- Tabulation on the 2010 population census of the Peoples Republic of China (2010), Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- Tilly, C. (1999), *Durable inequality*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Tong, R. (2013), *Feminist thought: A comprehensive introduction*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tsai, K.S. (2007), *Capitalism without democracy: The private sector in contemporary China*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014), *Higher education in Asia: expanding out, expanding up: the rise of graduate education and university research*, retrieved from: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/higher-education-in-asia-expanding-out-expanding-up-2014-en.pdf>, (accessed 14 June 2017).
- Unger, J. (2002), *Transformation of rural China*, New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Wang, F. (2008), *Boundaries and categories: Rising inequality in post-socialist urban China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Weber, M. (2009), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Whyte, M. (1984), *Sexual inequality under socialism: The Chinese case in perspective*, in J.L. Watson (Ed.), *Class and social stratification in post-revolution China* (pp. 198-238), New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Whyte, M. (2010), *Myth of the social volcano: Perceptions of inequality and distributive injustice in contemporary China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Whyte, M. (2012), *China's post-socialist inequality*, *Current History*, 111(746), 229-234.
- World Bank (2020), *Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)* (modelled ILO estimate), retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/sl.tlf.cact.fe.zs?locations=CN0-CN>, (accessed 22 July 2020).
- Xi J. (2013), "Jianchi nannü pingdeng jiben guocuo, fahui woguo funü weida zuoyong" [Upholding the fundamental state policy of equality between men and women, asserting women's great role in our country], *Xinhua Net*, retrieved from: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/31/c_117956150.htm, (accessed 17 August 2020).
- Xu, X. Q., Li, X. (2009), *Review and preview of the urbanization in Pearl River Delta in the past 30 years of reform and opening up*, *Economic Geography*, 29(1), 13-18.
- Yang, D. L. (1996), *Calamity and reform in China: State, rural society, and institutional change since the Great Leap Famine*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Yi, Z., Wang, Z. (2003), *Dynamics of family and elderly living arrangements in China: New lessons learned from the 2000 census*, *China Review*, 3(2), 95-119.
- Zhang, Z. (2000), *Mediating time: The "rice bowl of youth" in fin de siècle urban China*, *Public Culture*, 12(1), 93-113.
- Zheng, J. (2016), *New feminism in China: Young middle-class Chinese women in Shanghai*, Singapore: Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-10-0777-4
- Zheng, W. (2003), *Gender, employment and women's resistance*, in: E.J. Perry and M. Selden (Ed.), *Chinese society: Change, conflict and resistance* (pp. 162-186), London and New York: Routledge Curzon.

Martyna Nowak, PhD, obtained her doctoral degree from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her research focuses on gender issues, social policy analysis and social change, with a special focus on the issues in contemporary China and its transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. She has taught various courses for both undergraduate and graduate students. She holds a master's degree in Far East studies from Jagiellonian University, and was granted scholarships by the Polish, Chinese and Taiwanese Ministries of Education. Beside her academic achievements, she also has over 10 years of experience in the areas of consultancy, project management and diplomacy.