

“Women hold up half the Sky:” Continued Problems Faced by China’s Females

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Since a picture says a 1,000 words, I begin with a photo:



Can you guess who these characters are? And what's missing from the photo?

China celebrates 2015 International Women's Day, 1: Arresting and detaining 10 females, among them, the five women below:



The names of these Ladies are: Li Tingting, Wei Tingting, Zheng Churan, Wu Rongrong & Wang Man; all were released but they were kept in jail for lengthy periods & harshly treated by the police.

Their Crime?



Drawing attention to domestic violence in China; in the eyes of Chinese Government authorities, that's "picking quarrels and provoking troubles," i.e. trying to strengthen enforcement of a national law on this problem passed by the People's Congress

China Celebrates 2015 International Women's Day, 2: The Lighter Side!!



In Fuzhou, the capital of coastal Fujian Province, empathy for women is on full display, as the fellows stage a baton relay race in high heels in a shopping mall.

In 2016, the International Women's Day Frolics Continued:

On a mountain in Guangzhou, Chinese men again solidarity with women by climbing a mountain wearing ...

And a shopping mall in Liuzhou, Guangxi Province held a "bra-stripping" contest (this really did happen on International Women's Day).



The 2015 Chinese Central Television (CCTV) Spring Festival Gala does its bit for Female Empowerment:



Who do you suppose is CCTV's female ideal? Hint: She sings: I've got big eyes, small mouth, a high nose, long legs ... I'm pretty and a bunch of guys are chasing me that gives me "face."

Now some similar sage wisdom from the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) (circa 2012):

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.

Note: "Left-over" women are those who are still unmarried after turning 27. In reality, due to the huge gender imbalance caused by the 1-child policy, all women are in a "buyers market" when it comes to finding men.



She (above) is "not pretty" so she's "left-over"
(mom says that in an exchange)



"Maybe I'm selfish," says this woman about being
single

Images from Leta-Hong Fichner's mini-documentary, "Marriage Market Makeover," highly recommended!

More amazing pearls of wisdom from the ACWF (from their official website):

- Education and promiscuity/loose morals go together:

Many highly educated “leftover women” are very progressive in their thinking and enjoy going to nightclubs to search for 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.

- Your standards are just too darned high babe, try slumming!:

The main reason many girls become “leftover women” is that their standards for a partner are too high ... As girls are not too picky, finding a partner should be as easy as blowing away a speck of dust.

When holding out for a man, if you say he must be rich and brilliant, romantic and hardworking ... this is just being willful. Does this kind of perfect man exist? Maybe he does exist, but why on earth would he want to marry you?

- Adopt a tolerant attitude toward cheating and infidelity by men:

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.

- Way it go ACWF!! As part of its effort to boost women’s rights, local Women’s Federation branches have arranged matchmaking events for “highly educated, high-quality” women, March 2012 held drives in Pinghu, Zhejiang Province, for “leftover” women to speedily find conjugal happiness.
- Since 2008, Nanjing & Ningbo population planning commissions have carried out “interventions” to address the “leftover women crisis.”

Here's a Chinese woman whose found happiness, albeit not of conjugal kind:



Taiwan's recently elected President, Tsai Ing-wen:

- Academic before turning politician.
- MA Cornell University.
- Ph.D. London School of Economics.
- Described by U.S. diplomats (Wiki Leaks) as “extremely bright and capable.”
- Likes cats.
- And, yes, unmarried.
- Also freaking out the PRC aka Mainland China, because she's from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); unlike previous ruling Guomintang party, DDR doesn't favor closer Mainland ties.

Her election is yet another in a string of big foreign policy setbacks for China, Beijing is in a panic mode, so time to trot out the hoary old chestnuts about such women being “extreme” & “emotional” because they lack husbands; that's the verdict of Wang Weixin of the Beijing Academy of Military Sciences.

And now for some hard data, facts:

Women losing ground in wages and career advancement in companies

- Wage gaps: in 2013, women earned 40.7% less than men, in 2000 earned 19.6% (This gap is high throughout Asia, but greatest in China).
- Female urban labor force participation: According to the 2010 census data, down to 60% from 77% years earlier.
- “Glass ceiling:” Just 25% of supervisory positions & up held by women; under 10% of board members of China’s top three hundred publicly traded (CSI 300) companies are women.
- My experience at a Chinese State-Owned Enterprise (SOE): Women with master’s degrees in engineering working as secretaries, just two female department heads; among SOEs, 30 of 31 SOEs on China’s CSI 300 (equivalent of S&P 500) had no female senior leadership.

That said, many Chinese women are succeeding as entrepreneurs

- In fact, 7 of the world’s 14 wealthiest females are Chinese.
- Meet Cheng Yan (on the right), co-founder of Nine Dragon Paper, the wealthiest woman on the planet.
- A true rags to riches story, hailed from a poor family in northeast China.
- Another case, property magnate, Zhang Xin, CEO of Soho.
- But female businesswomen face problems, including male-oriented rituals, such as swilling Baijiu (a potent clear spirit, real firewater).



More on women & the workplace in China:

Legal remedies for gender discrimination in the workplace?

- Law bans gender discrimination, but doesn't define it, vagueness makes it hard to win cases.
- Has not prevented employers from using criteria like age, height, appearance in hiring women.
- In a 2010 ACWF survey, 72% of women said they experienced gender discrimination at work.



These statutes haven't prevented many high tech firms from hiring "pretty" women "cheerleaders" to help motivate staff (see photos below):



Life-work balance? What life-work balance?!

Professional women:

- Often have career put on hold or face glass ceiling after having a child.
- China has a very bad child care infrastructure, pre-kindergarten day care limited, poor quality & very expensive.
- Big factor in keeping the birth rate low.

Migrant female workers have it much worse:

- Only 20% of migrant workers take their children with them to large cities.
- Why: Bigger impact of “hukou” system on them vs. professional ladies.
- Hence, the problem of “left-behind” children: 61-70 million, or 20% of all Chinese children 17 or younger (equals total number of kids in U.S.);
- These kids are at risk, psychologically, abuse, but above all for education;
- Things for rural migrant children in cities isn't much better.

Photo on the right from PEOPLE'S DAILY of tots in a “motherless village.”



This matters for China's economic future:

- Country faces big looming labor shortages, due to a plunging birthrate.
- Given this trend, it needs to be maximizing female participation in the urban work-force, not lowering it.
- China's endowment of educated human capital, vital for enabling it to avoid the “middle-income” trap, is shockingly poor (just 1/4 of Chinese children go beyond middle-school, much lower than other emerging economies).
- Low through-put rate to high school & beyond related to the hukou system & impact on migrant workers & their children.

Nature's oldest profession and mistresses, lo!

The sex industry is alive & well:

- 10 million sex workers in China (equal to Greece's population).
- 300,000 prostitutes in Dongguan alone (population 8 million).
- Many work out of beauty salons, massage parlors, & KTV places.
- Recently, "strike hard" campaign launched by police against prostitution in major cities (photo on right is from Shanghai crackdown).
- This has created "new frontiers" for Chinese prostitution in Africa, 13-18,000 sex workers from China in sub-Saharan part of the continent, another mode of "China going global."



Mistresses (Concubines)

- Although no hard data exists, anecdotal evidence suggest this profession has been making a major comeback.
- Meet China's most notorious "mistress" on the right, Guo Meimei, aka "baby Guo."
- Was recently arrested for running an illegal gambling den.
- Charged 100,000 RMB (\$17,000) a night pro "client."
- Tried to be China's answer to the Kim Kardashian.
- Other credits include nearly ruining China's Red Cross by claiming to be its commercial manager.



To end full circle, back to the start of the PPT, more on domestic violence:

Figures & that law on domestic mentioned earlier on Slide 3:

- Surveys show 25-40% Chinese women suffer domestic violence, but the numbers are likely much higher, due to underreporting stemming for shame culture around it.
- Two high profile cases lead to passage of a landmark law on domestic violence (see photos below):



Kim Lee won a \$1.9 million judgement against Li Yang, founder of Crazy English, a popular English teaching firm, after publishing photos on Weibo; court ruling landmark for mentioning domestic violence.

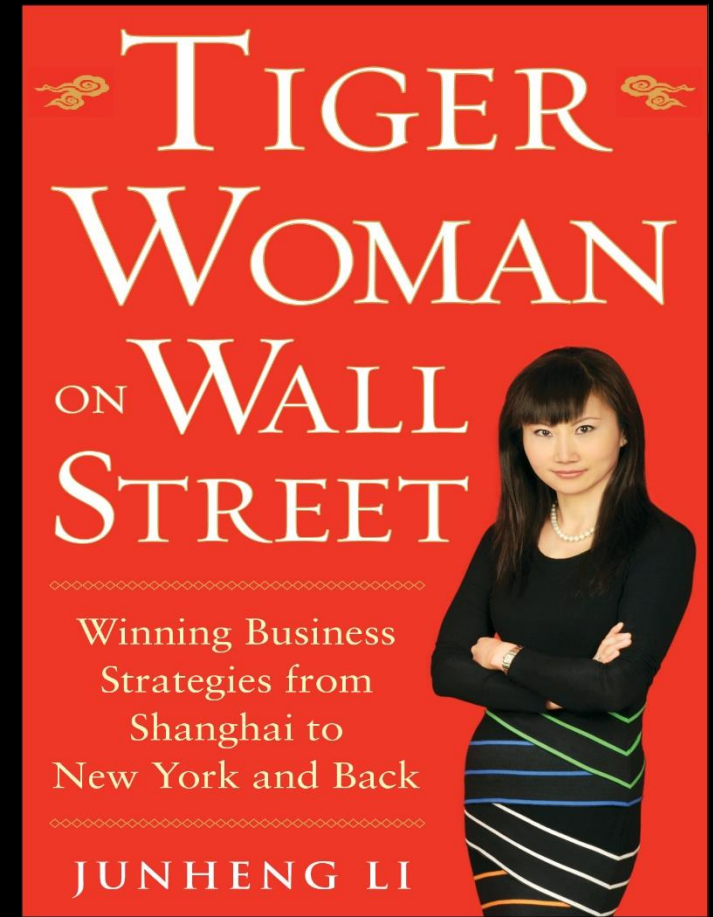
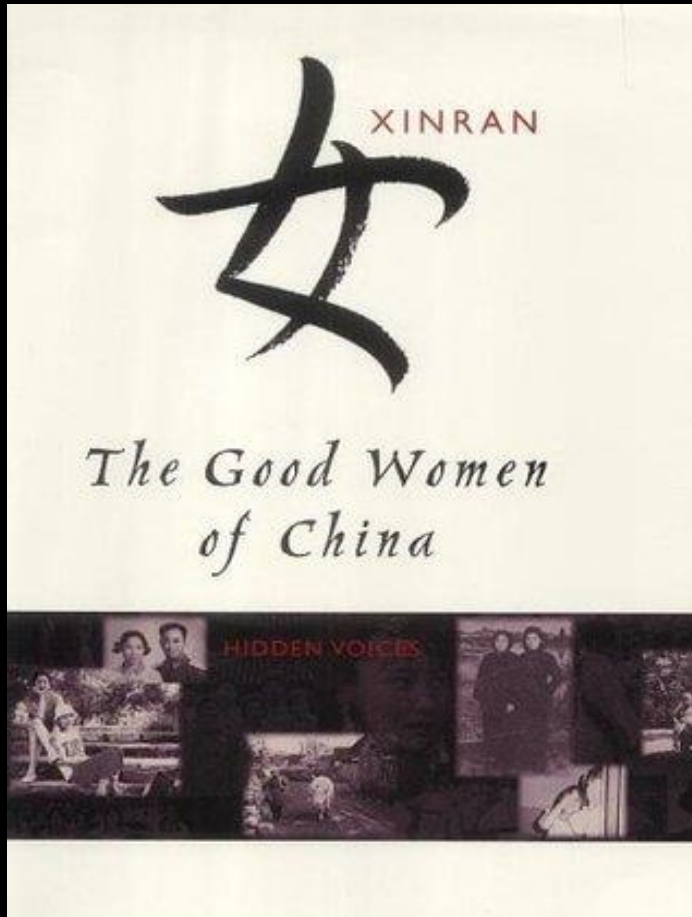


Li Yan, a poor woman from Sichuan, got the death sentence (2010) for killing her abusive husband after he threatened kill her with a rifle, in 2015, due to outcry in & outside of China her death sentence was “suspended.”



- So what about that law? Clearly a step forward, but police remain reluctant to intervene (onus is on them to do so), nothing said about marital rape, & as of 2015, no shelters for battered women in Beijing, & there's that 2015 International Women's Day business.

To sum up, I don't deny Chinese women have made a lot of progress since 1949. Things are certainly much better than before, especially compared to Imperial China. For those interested in further reading, here are a trio of books:



Ok, if you want to contact me for this PPT and my writing, email writer@danielgarst.com.