

Research Process Synopsis and Annotated Bibliography

Chinese Feminism: Comedy Could Change the Current Situation and Push the Way to Equal Rights

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Synopsis

Although I was aware when I was growing up that there was unequal treatment between men and women, and that there were many people who fight for equal rights, I did not realize it was feminism. After learning more about feminism in the university, I started to be curious about feminism in my home country—China. How did it originate and develop? What is its condition now? What are its flaws and how can we improve it? How is it influenced by comedy? By reading some materials, I realized that there were few sources about female comedians in China. I thought it was one of the huge differences in attitudes toward feminism between China and Western countries. I was very curious about why. The source “Equality, Did You Say? Chinese Feminism after 30 Years of Reforms” mainly talked about the development of Chinese Feminism since the Reform and Open-up in the 1980s. In this source, the author mentioned that “although the principle of equality of men and women has figured in the Constitution since 1950, it remains far from being realised” (Angeloff and Lieber 17). The government had legislated gender equality in China since 1949, and the nation created an environment that simply eliminated the difference between men and women. However, this kind of “equality” was still unreal because of the Confucian culture and male-dominated governments. After the 1980s, this situation has improved, but it still has many problems for the reason of government control. Through reading the source, I started to understand why there is little comedy about feminism in China. Although Chinese

feminism has developed over hundreds of years, it still suffers restrictions in an academic way. There are not many female comedians now, and most people learn and know feminism still from western comedies and talk shows. We are still in the process.

Because I want to work with this topic, I think my intended audiences are students and scholars who are interested in comedy, Chinese culture, and international feminism.

In my proposed paper, I want to briefly talk first about the development of Chinese feminism from its origin in the late 19th century to today. Then I want to describe the general situation of comedy in China and why China has little comedy related to feminism. The government still controls entertainment today, and all the shows, movies and publications need to be censored by the government before release. The government wants to block the sensitive terms about “feminism” because the government believes it would discourage women from having babies. And the government does not want that kind of “-ism” to hinder the increase of population, for the reason that China has been in a population aging situation for years. However, more and more people from the younger generations in China are now learning from western countries. We read western literature, watch shows and movies, and we are more open-minded than the older generations. When the younger generations have a chance to work for and influence government, they will be more welcoming about feminism. Also, they could be more friendly about including topics of feminism in entertainment media. On their way to equal rights, comedy is an excellent way to become the starting point that changes the current situation in China. Most of the people in China now watch comedy shows and read novels about comedy. It is a common and accessible way to change people's minds and let them accept new concepts more easily. We still have a long way to equal rights, but I think China will be more opened-up in the future.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Angeloff, Tania, and Marylène Lieber “Equality, Did You Say? Chinese Feminism after 30 Years of Reforms.” *China Perspectives*, no. 4, Jan. 2012, pp. 17–24, search.proquest.com/docview/1315599906/.

Tania Angeloff and Marylène Lieber wrote the article. Tania Angeloff is a sociologist in Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She researches qualitative social research, social theory in development and Chinese society. Marylène Lieber is an Associate Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Geneva. She is also a sociologist and specialist of both gender violence in public places and Chinese migration – with a particular focus on Chinese sex workers in Paris.

This is a scholarly source. It was published in an academic journal which called *China Perspectives* in January 2012. This English journal is about social science, political science and relations, and humanities that published CEFC in Hongkong since 2007.

The article is about Chinese feminism after 30 years of reforms, and its intended audience are all students and scholars who are interested in Chinese society and gender roles. In the article, the authors talk about the current situations and challenges of Chinese feminism through history after the economic reform of 1978. Since thousands of years ago, China is a male-dominated country. The basic gender role of women is just staying at home, worrying about house work and taking care of children. Although this situation has improved after the origin of feminism, China is still that much developed. The first part of the report provides a quick assessment of the inequalities between men and women. The second

part examines concrete actions and programmes that have been adopted by the Chinese government since the 1990s. The last section discusses the legitimacy and monopoly of the Chinese government on the issue of equality, as well as the natural economic pursuit of women and feminists, and introduces the general situations of some famous feminists in China. (Angeloff and Lieber)

This article is critical to me. Although it was published seven years ago, it still has many points that are not outdated. The authors talk about "Chinese feminism today is a product of both its ancient and recent history and is linked to as well as breaking away from Western feminism, with which dialog has increased since 1995" (Angeloff and Lieber 22), which fitted my aim of the development of Chinese feminism and how it is influenced by western feminism. As a said before, the younger generations are now learning from western countries, and we are eager to communicate and get knowledge that could push our countries to be closer to equal rights and become more friendly to all genders and communities.

2. He, Qinglian. "China: Wiping Out the Truth." *The New York Review of Books*, 24 Feb. 2005, www.nybooks.com/articles/2005/02/24/china-wiping-out-the-truth/.

Qinglian He wrote the article. She is a Chinese author and economist, and she is most prominently known for her critical view of Chinese society and media controls in China.

This is a popular source. It was published in *The New York Review of Books* on February 24, 2005. It is a semi-monthly journal published in New York City. It always has articles in literature, culture, economics, science and current affairs.

This article is about how the Chinese government controls the media, and the intended audience is general public that is interested in the current affairs all around the world. The article first used an example to let the audience feel what would really happen in Chinese society. Four hundred people were poisoned by eating in a snack shop in Nanjing, but the local news did not mention that at all until that accident was spread overseas and reported by foreign countries. The author thought that even though the Chinese Communist Party and the government tried to create a freedom atmosphere to media, they did not do it actually. They did not want information that is disadvantageous to the government. (He)

I want to talk about how Chinese government controls entertainment media in my research paper, so I think this source is beneficial to me. As the author said in the article that "every Chinese publication, however gaudy, she writes, still has to be owned by a state-controlled organization," the Chinese government did not want the speeches that may impede its ideal development of future (He). For me, I want to use this source to help my audience to learn more about the current situation of China and then talk about how could it change and why we want to change.

3. Hernández, Javier C., and Albee Zhang. "Writer of Erotic Novels in China Is Jailed for Producing Gay Pornography." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 19 Nov. 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/11/19/world/asia/tianyi-china-erotic-novels-prison.html?_ga=2.47091943.1776991058.1542737412-60038970.1542737412.

The author Javier C. Hernández is a China correspondent for *The New York Times* based in Beijing. Since joining *The Times* in 2008, he has covered education, financial markets, and New York City politics.

This is a popular source. It is an article from *The New York Times* last November, and its intended audience would be all people who are interested in international news. The article mainly talked about a Chinese female writer who faced more than a decade of prison because of producing gay pornography. Also, this act triggered a large amount of protest.

Actually I want to quote this article to be my beginning. For me, it's not just an article, because the author was one of my favorite writers and I was one of the participants of protest at that time. I think it is a good example of "harmony society" in China. "'The punishment for rape can be three years,' said Deng Xueping, deputy director of the Shanghai office of Capital Equity Legal Group, a law firm. 'Selling pornography or raping a girl — which is more harmful?'" This quote expressed my thoughts perfectly. Obviously raping a girl is more terrible than just selling pornography but sentencing of raping is much lighter than selling pornography. It is ridiculous and ironic. The current laws in China are seldom friendly to women and minority communities.

4. Xu, Zhen. "Contextual Dimensions in Interactional Humour: How Humour Is Practiced in Selected American and Chinese Situation Comedies." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 60, Elsevier B.V., Jan. 2014, pp. 24–35, doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2013.10.009.

Zhen Xu writes this article. She is a lecturer at Fudan University, Shanghai, China. And she teaches a variety of English language related subjects including Culture Reading and English Public Speaking there. She holds a Ph.D. in linguistics from Shanghai International Studies University. Zhen's research interests include humor and linguistics, pragmatics, translation, as well as intercultural studies.

This is a scholarly source. It was published in Volume 60 of *Journal of Pragmatics* in January 2014. This academic journal is a monthly peer-reviewed. It was first established and published by Jacob L. Mey and Hartmut Haberland in 1977.

This article is about “examining the role of context on the communication of humor in the American situation comedy *Friends*, and the Chinese situation comedy *Love My Family*” (Xu 24). She described the context terms—physical, temporal, and experiential—to compare and contrast the linguistic settings and how this affected the mode and effectiveness of humor delivery in those two situation comedies. Also, “it has been found that the overall frequency of humor in the American and the Chinese sitcoms are statistically similar, at 47% and 46% respectively” (Xu 35).

I think the intended audience of the article are students and scholars who are interested in Chinese culture and comedy. Although *Love My Family* and *Friends* are both comedies, they are still classical now. The article mentioned the current situation of comedy in China and America, which I think will be useful in my paper. In the article, the author thought that *Friends* “is easier for non-native viewers to understand such humor if only they have a firm grasp of the working language (English in this case)” (Xu 34). I think this sentence also represents that the Chinese comedy is more local and traditional, which means it is more male-dominated than American comedy. And it is related to the point that I want to talk about the recent situation of Chinese comedy.

5. Swink, Robyn Stacia. “Lemony Liz and Likable Leslie: Audience Understandings of Feminism, Comedy, and Gender in Women-Led Television Comedies.” *Feminist Media*

Studies, vol. 17, no. 1, Feb. 2017, pp. 14–28. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/14680777.2017.1261832.

Stacia Robyn Swink writes the article. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology, and a minor in Women and Gender Studies of the University of Missouri. She is specialized in cultural studies, the sociology of gender, race, the sociology of humor, and feminist theory.

This article is published in Vol. 17 Issue 1 of *Feminist Media Studies*. *Feminist Media Studies* is a peer-reviewed journal covering media and communication studies from a feminist perspective. Routledge published it in 2001.

The article is about the interpretation of four American popular female comedy shows—*30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*, *The Mindy Project*, and *Girls*. In the article, the author mainly talks about how audience members think these women showrunners impact these shows, and how they see feminism playing a role (or not) in these shows (Swink 14). She thinks that “while these audience members enjoyed the shows, ambivalence permeated their understanding of and relationship to the shows, not only in their perceptions of the shows as feminist but also resulting from their interpretation of the humor and gender dynamics of the shows.”

I think the intended audience for this article are students and scholars interested in both feminism and comedy. For me, the reason that I chose this article is that those comedies the article mentioned about are also popular in China. When I look up those comedies in Baidu (the most prominent Chinese search engine), I could find them all with Chinese subtitles and many discussions about them. I want to use this source in the part of talking about how the younger generation in China is influenced by western comedies. The article said that “this lack of and insensitivity to diversity is a common critique of these four shows

and the potentially homogenous audiences they appeal to," and I think we also have this kind of comments in China. We learn the advantage of western culture, but also see it as a critical way (Swink 16).

6. Wesoky, S.R. "Harmony and Critique: Chinese Modernity, Harmonious Society, and Contemporary Chinese Feminist Perspectives." *China's Rise to Power: Conceptions of State Governance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 49–69, doi:10.1057/9781137276742.

Sharon R. Wesoky wrote the article in 2012. She is a political science professor at Allegheny College. She focuses on Buddhist practice and political imaginaries in China, Chinese feminist thought in the context of Chinese intellectual criticism, Marxism and Buddhism as alternative modernities, and theoretical perspectives on alternative modernities in China.

This is a scholarly source. It is one of the chapters in the academic book *China's Rise to Power: Conceptions of State Governance*. It is an essay collection which balances policy analysis with a detailed investigation of escalating popular unrest to anticipate the future of Chinese governance and society.

In this particular chapter, the author examines the fraught and complicated relationship between contemporary rhetoric used to describe the China experience and feminism. She discusses some keywords like "nationalism," "harmonious society," "feminism," and their relations between the Chinese party-state and its female citizens. Although "men and women are equal" were written in the constitution, many people still

have discrimination to female sometimes. Also, the intended audiences are scholars and students who are interested in modern Chinese society (Wesoky).

For me, I think it would also be a beneficial source in my paper. The terms like "nationalism" and "harmonious" are very representative of modern Chinese society (Wesoky 49). The conclusion of the article says that "the notion of harmonious society (hexie shehui) and other aspects of the China experience retain considerable contingency in their long-term implications for gender politics" and it is actually what I need in my paper, that I agree with the points of Chinese feminism still has "conceptual hollowness" (Wesoky 49). It just has academic ideas but not much about actual application. The government claimed that we are now living in a "harmony society," but it is far away from paradise. So, our country still has much space to develop and improve.