



Revisiting Gender Inequality

Perspectives from the
People's Republic of China

Edited by Qi Wang, Min Dongchao,
and Bo Ærenlund Sørensen



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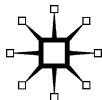
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*Qi Wang, Min Dongchao, and
Bo Ærenlund Sørensen*

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REVISITING GENDER INEQUALITY

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Series Editor's Foreword

In April 2015, a transnational mobilization of feminist activists, in solidarity with Chinese feminists organizing to secure the release of five feminist activists, known as China's Feminist Five, catapulted key feminist issues of sexual harassment, violence against women, and growing gender inequality in China into the global media. The Feminist Five—Wei Tingting, Li Tingting (Li Maizi), Wu Rongrong, Wang Man, and Zheng Churan (Datu)—were detained on the suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” after they had planned a multicity protest aimed at bringing an end to sexual harassment on public transport. They represent an increasingly vocal group of young activists who are taking to the Internet and the streets to voice their anger at the growing sexism and gender inequality in China today. Sexual harassment; economic inequity; gendered wage gaps; violence against women’ and patriarchal ideologies of domesticity, marriage, and womanhood (the so-called leftover women) all take center stage in feminist struggles in the China of 2015. *Revisiting Gender Inequality: Perspectives from the People’s Republic of China*, brings together feminist research on gender inequality published in China between 2009 and 2013. These translated essays provide a coherent picture of the last four decades of economic reforms and market development in China and the subsequent struggles for gender equality. *Revisiting Gender Inequality* is thus uniquely positioned to challenge the hegemony of Western knowledge about China, and is a perfect fit for the Comparative Feminist Studies (CFS) series.

Revisiting Gender Inequality addresses key questions for knowledge production and access to readers in the West. Asking questions about *what* Western readers know about gender inequality in China, and also *how* we know what we know, that is, raising questions about the structuring, translation, and travel of knowledges across cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical borders, the book interjects the voices of Chinese feminist scholars on gender inequality to “counterbalance the overwhelming predominance of non-Chinese academic works related to gender and gender inequality in China.” The introduction thus argues that the positionality of the scholars in this collection is a potential corrective to the “possible bias of international scholarship on women in China” (Introduction, 6–7).

The CFS series takes up fundamental analytic and political issues involved in the cross-cultural production of knowledge about women and feminism, examining the politics of scholarship and knowledge in relation to feminist organizing and social justice movements. It is designed to foreground writing, organizing, and reflection on feminist trajectories across the historical and cultural borders of nation-states. Drawing on feminist thinking in a number of fields, the CFS series targets innovative, comparative feminist scholarship, pedagogical and curricular strategies, and community organizing and political education. It explores a comparative feminist praxis that addresses some of the most urgent questions facing progressive critical thinkers and activists today.

Over the past many decades, feminists across the globe have been variously successful at addressing fundamental issues of oppression and liberation. In our search for gender justice in the early twenty-first century, however, we inherit a number of the challenges our mothers and grandmothers have faced. But there are also new challenges to face as we attempt to make sense of a world indelibly marked by the failure of settler-colonial and postcolonial (and advanced) capitalist and communist nation-states to provide for the social, economic, spiritual, and psychic needs of the majority of the world's population. In the year 2015, globalization has come to represent the interests of corporations and the free market rather than self-determination and freedom from political, cultural, and economic domination for all the world's peoples. The project of US-empire building and the rise of Islamophobia in that country and Europe, alongside the dominance of corporate capitalism and neoliberalism, kills, disenfranchises, and impoverishes women everywhere. Militarization, environmental degradation, heterosexist state practices, religious fundamentalisms, sustained migrations of peoples across the borders of nations and geopolitical regions, environmental crises, and the exploitation of women's labor by capital all pose profound challenges for feminists at this time. Neoliberal economic policies and discourses of development and progress mark yet another form of colonial/imperial governance, masking the exercise of power over people's lives through claims of empowerment. In China, economic reforms and capitalist market development have led to profoundly negative consequences for women. Recovering and remembering insurgent histories, and seeking new understandings of political subjectivities and citizenship, has never been so important, in these times marked by social amnesia, global consumer culture, and the worldwide mobilization of fascist notions of "national security."

These are some of the very challenges the CFS series is designed to address. The series takes as its fundamental premise the need for feminist engagement with global as well as local ideological, historical, economic, and political processes, and the urgency of transnational dialogue in building an ethical culture capable of withstanding and transforming the commodified and exploitative practices of global governance structures, culture and economics. Individual volumes in the CFS series provide systemic and challenging interventions into the (still) largely Euro-Western feminist studies knowledge base, while simultaneously highlighting the work that can and needs to be done to envision and enact cross-cultural, multiracial feminist solidarity. Thus, *Revisiting Gender Inequality* is a perfect fit for this series.

Revisiting Gender Inequality suggests that feminist positionality and the notion of “intercultural translation” within the theoretical framework of “epistemologies of the South” (developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos) are together key to dismantling global power relations of knowledge and producing counter-hegemonic knowledges anchored in the lived realties of women in China. In addition, essays in this book engage in a deep critique of China’s capitalist development, arguing that the new left critique of China’s economic reforms are inadequate since they do not address the deeply gendered consequences of the market economy. Authors tackle issues of gender bias and gender insensitivity head-on, challenging normative discourses of the state, development policy, as well as mainstream intellectual thought.

A volume that will be of interest to scholars and activists alike—one that helps us “see” what we so often miss in the grand narratives of revolutions, social movements, and knowledge paradigms, and one that provides an important and insightful corrective to discourses of gender inequality in contemporary China.

CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY
Series Editor, Ithaca, New York

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