

MASTER'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Gender Inequality in China Today
Student's name:	Zhaohui Deng
Referee's name:	Hana Kubatova

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	35
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	10
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	10
Total		80	55
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	8
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	4
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	4
Total		20	16
TOTAL		100	71

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

This was an interesting summary of (selected) gender issues in China today. The author focuses on developments on the labor market, in education, fertility and family, and considers especially young people under the age of 35 when tackling these complex issues. The proposal introduces three hypotheses, but nowhere in the text are these properly and critically tested—and the selected methodology is also not suited for any actual testing. In the thesis itself, then, the hypotheses were turned into research objectives, without really clarifying how they were selected and what is their purpose.

In its current form, the author works with literature analysis “method” (not sure I would call this method) and semi-structured interviews “methos” with altogether 20 individuals, male and female, from urban and rural areas in second a third-tier cities in China. We do not get to know more how these were selected and although I was looking forward to learning

more from these, interviews were used rather sporadically in the text. For instance, on page 19, we read that “several female managers” felt that their promotion in the workplace was unsuccessful after having children, but we do not learn how much is several, who these women were, or whether they considered to be successful before having children. It would have been useful to know more about the interviewees, including their age and background, as well as how the interviews were conducted and when.

Somewhat surprisingly, the author takes literature review outside of the introduction—something that for me contributed to the descriptive character of the work. When I began my review with speaking of a summary, this is what I was referring to: what is the broader debate this thesis enters? What is the puzzle scholars were discussing, and not agreeing on? How does this thesis depart from what we already know? This is what I would like to learn from the introduction, and this is what would have helped the author go from describing into examining.

Not to get me wrong, the thesis does speak of important issues being discussed—in the introduction itself, for instance, the author discusses the “increasing number of women who cannot tolerate domestic violence and seek women’s protection.” Without providing us with any references, the author also refers to “a very wide debate, the famous Xuzhou trafficking case and the Tangshan assault case” (page 3), but for some reason, these are not connected to the text itself. Sometimes, the author even provides evidence for there actually being the opposite—a high tolerance for domestic violence. For instance on page 39 and again without providing any reference, the author speaks of domestic violence being “the most common reason for ending a marriage.” How do we know that? And how does it then explain the supposed “high tolerance” of domestic violence in the public arena (pages 41-2)?

In short, while finding this an interesting reading, I also thought the thesis lacks a firmer connection to broader literature on gender equality that would go beyond China. It also lacks a clearly articulated research question that it would seek to answer with proper methods. If domestic violence is an issue widely debated, and if, as the introduction suggests, there is less of women who “cannot tolerate” this, I would be curious to learn more about how this manifests itself in practice—and if not, why. This was, for me at least, one of the puzzles I was left with after reading the thesis, and that I would be curious to know more about.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): C

Suggested questions for the defence are: see above

I (do not) recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.