

# ***Research on the Impact of New Youth Magazine on Modern and Contemporary Chinese Women***

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the historical and contemporary impact of *New Youth* magazine on the liberation and empowerment of Chinese women, with a focus on its role during the New Culture Movement and its enduring legacy in modern China. Using a qualitative historical research design, primary sources such as key articles from *New Youth* and secondary materials were analyzed to explore themes of gender equality, education, and social participation. The study reveals how *New Youth* critiqued feudal ethics, awakened women's consciousness, and advocated for educational reforms and women's rights, significantly influencing societal attitudes and policies. The magazine's contributions to shaping women's independence, promoting access to education, and encouraging career and political participation are discussed in-depth, alongside case studies of modern female leaders, such as Dong Mingzhu and Tu Youyou, who exemplify its lasting impact. The research further highlights the continuity of *New Youth's* ideals in contemporary efforts to address gender disparities, including the growth of female enrollment in higher education and the establishment of legal protections for women. The findings emphasize the pivotal role of *New Youth* in advancing gender equality in China and offer valuable insights for ongoing advocacy and policymaking aimed at fostering a more inclusive society.

**Keywords:** New Youth, Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality, Educational Reforms, New Culture Movement.

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## **1. Introduction**

The *New Youth* magazine played a very important role in general major socio-political change especially women's rights and gender equality in China during the early 20th century. Emanating during the height of New Culture Movement, the *New Youth* played a crucial role in challenging norms and advocating for a reformed society that was more inclusive and egalitarian. The New Culture Movement, as initiated in the

1910s, would modernize China by eliminating feudalism and Confucian traditions and aimed to introduce the new ideas for governance, education, and social functions. It is concerned with advocating science, democracy, and personal rights, thus affecting women's roles in society (Bai, Jia, & Wang, 2023). For women's issues, the New Culture Movement was a very important turning point. It called on the public to question age-old habits of subordinating women and limiting their opportunity for personal development and professional development. This was the first possibility of an inclusive society, which meant women were going to participate in all dimensions of social, political, and economic life; such a vision was brought on to a platform through New Youth magazine.

Since the inception of the New Youth movement, the status of women in China has been rooted more or less in Confucianism as a value system emphasizing patriarchal control, leading to generally rampant gender inequality and women's rights oppression. Women were generally confined to the domestic sphere; they have their roles defined narrowly by traditional practices including footbinding, arranged marriage, and strict codes of behavior (Zeshan, 2024). These were the practices typical of the feudal society in which women were primarily seen as daughters, wives, and mothers and not as rights-holding subjects to education, work, or political participation (Teng et al., 2021). The Chinese social structure, therefore, placed strict limitations on women's engagement in intellectual, economic, or political life; the idea of women as citizens of secondary standing was deeply embedded in Chinese society (Gu & Nie, 2021). Education, which also limited women due to the low and scarce available facilities, created further complications; often, girls were discouraged from getting formal education. This forced most professional lines of work into female exclusions, restricting the participation of women in any kind of social or political procedures. This positioned them at the lower rungs of the social scale (Morgan & Jan, 2022).

The New Youth magazine, first published in 1915, became an essential voice in the New Culture Movement, and it directly addressed the social and cultural issues that shaped women's lives. Its radical ideas about gender equality and women's rights were a stark departure from the traditional narratives that had dominated Chinese society for centuries (Yang, 2020). Through the magazine's criticism of feudal ethics, it advocated for the elimination of all restrictive practices on women's rights, including foot-binding and arranged marriages, while promoting women's education and employment (Xiaoyan et al., 2022). The journal became the intellectual forum for thinkers and activists who believed that women's liberation was a critical part of the country's modernization process. Many of the editors and contributors to the magazine were intellectuals and reformers who argued that the emancipation of women was not only critical for the advancement of women but also for the development of the nation as a whole (Bai et al., 2023). By linking the women's rights cause to national rejuvenation, New Youth elevated this cause from being a personal concern to a national issue.

It would then proceed to investigate New Youth magazine as a means through which it exercises influence over Chinese women's liberation and empowerment, analyzing how the magazine's articles, themes, and ideologies contributed to shaping discussions on gender equality, women's rights, and social reform in early 20th-century China. Influence is not limited to the present; it can extend back to the historical era of the New Culture Movement while still remaining relevant to contemporary issues. The study examines how New Youth contributed to making women's consciousness, further education opportunities, prospects for career advancements, and fostering

more civic and political engagements. This article focuses on the period from the late 19th century, the beginning of modern China, up to the present day, explaining how advocacy by the magazine on women's rights provided a foundation for continuing reforms in women's education and social status. Moreover, it looks into how the critiques of feudal ethics and patriarchal norms portrayed in the magazine affected women's self-perception and how they were able to shape modern Chinese society (Xiaomin & Xue, 2023). With such a historical approach, the paper aims to contribute an all-inclusive understanding of how the magazine plays a transformative role both in the ideational and the practical dimensions of women's liberation.

The most imperative goals of the paper will try to establish exactly how New Youth magazine condemned the prevalent feudal ethics within society, holding women subordinate with its customary restrictive approach towards women's roles within society. Highlighting this detrimental consequence, as revealed through such critiques, served to awaken women's previously unconscious minds into examining the conventional duties bestowed upon women and instead looked at newer potentials in life by themselves. This paper will discuss how the magazine's advocacy for the rejection of these outdated traditions helped to create a space for women to engage in public life, pursue education, and contribute to the nation's modernization (Sun, 2020). Among such objectives is a critical analysis on how New Youth promoted women's education and changed the educational landscape, thereby greatly opening up further opportunities for self and professional advancement for women in that society (Song & Zhao, 2022). The influence of the magazine in educational reforms formed a base for future generations of women who were able to attain higher education and join the workforce, free from the strict traditional bounds that once defined their role (Yorulmaz, 2021). It will also look at how the promotion of women's rights by this magazine and the emphasis on participation in social, economic, and political activity prepared the way for more extensive changes in the society that allowed the feminist movements to come through in China.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution toward a deeper understanding of the role of media in shaping women's liberation movements in China. Focusing on New Youth magazine, it highlights how social attitudes and gender norms have been influenced by the media, challenging and redefining such deeply ingrained cultural practices as identified by Xiaomin and Xue (2023). The magazine's critique of feudalism and its advocacy for women's rights are foundational in understanding the historical development of women's liberation in China, and this study offers critical insights into how these early efforts continue to influence contemporary gender issues in Chinese society (Yang, 2020). Additionally, an investigation on New Youth's influence on women's education, social involvement, and political participation reveals that these reforms have continued relevance in the contemporary China setting that suffers from severe gender inequality (Wang & Gao, 2022). In this context, by focusing on historical situation and the contemporary effects, this study is relevant to discourses that discuss modern-day gender equality and the position of women in contemporary China.

This research is also important for its implications in addressing contemporary gender inequality. While substantial progress has been made in improving the status of women in China, significant challenges remain in terms of gender representation in leadership positions, wage disparity, and societal expectations of women's roles in both family and work environments (Gu & Nie, 2021). Through its focus on the role of New Youth magazine in contributing to this movement, the research provides an interesting historical view

regarding how media and intellectual movements can shape and affect gender equality in China up to the present. Understanding the impact of this advocacy for women's rights on its legacy provides insight into the challenges women face today (Costa Melo et al., 2023). In this regard, the study not only has important implications for scholarship but can also draw practical lessons for contemporary endeavors to fight against gender-discriminatory practices and realize women's empowerment in China (Zhu et al., 2022). By doing so, the present relevance of New Youth's message of equality and empowerment is once again put forward and education, social reform, and political engagement are identified as important factors for the evolving dynamics of the global fight for gender equality in China.

## 2. Historical Context

This was the era of modern China, from the mid-19th century to 1949. It was marked by strict feudal structures that defined women's social and political roles. For centuries, Chinese society had been dominated by Confucian norms that forced women into subservient roles in the family and the larger community. These feudal values restricted the freedom and scope of women's opportunities outside their homes, making them part of a patriarchal social order. Women were restricted to domestic activities, marriage, and childbearing, with almost no involvement in public life, education, or employment. Footbinding, for example, was practiced on a large scale, symbolizing the ways through which women's bodies were kept confined to reinforce social expectations (Zhang, 2023). Furthermore, educational facilities for women were not available, as most schools catered only to men, thus preventing women from acquiring the knowledge that could empower them to challenge the status quo (Wang & Gao, 2022). In this social climate, women's lives were dictated by a strict adherence to feudal ethics, and their participation in social, political, and economic spheres was severely curtailed.

Indeed, the first part of the 20th century marked the changing tide of history in China as it moved further into its life with New Culture Movement and then the May Fourth Movement—the very two significant moments that challenged and changed social behavior. And that was not enough; leading the charge was *New Youth*, a publication founded in 1915 to challenge traditional norms and speak out against the feudal ethic. The magazine really played a fundamental role in recreating the mental outlook of intellectuals in China to call for women's emancipation from the aged feudal systems oppressing women, calling for equal status and rights among genders. With this call was the intellectual revolution of freeing the women. The May Fourth Movement of 1919, which was very much dominated by *New Youth*, became the epitome of national and cultural rejuvenation and was encouraged to be actively involved in the new form of nationhood (Zhe, 2023). The call of the movement to reject the traditional norms of Confucianism became the platform for increasing women's education opportunities and a new route toward the participation of women in the public sphere. It was the encouragement of women to seek education, work, and participate in politics that marked the start of a huge shift in gender norms.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, important political and social reforms occurred, especially those concerning gender equality, which were under the strong influence of the ideals introduced by *New Youth* and the New Culture Movement. The socialist government, under the leadership of the Communist Party, adopted a progressive stance on women's rights, recognizing that the advancement of women was integral to the success of the nation. The Marriage Law of 1950, for example,

was a landmark piece of legislation that outlawed arranged marriages, child marriage, and concubinage, all of which had been prevalent under the feudal system (Zhang & Sun, 2022). The law also established equality rights of women in marriage, such as the right to divorce, bringing a sharp divide from the old patriarchal trends. In this regard, the policies were socially motivated by socialist ideology that saw equality between men and women as the path to a more just and balanced society. This means the ideals of New Youth magazine, that had long since advocated for women's emancipation and education, could find their relevance in new socialist policies, as implemented to help cultivate gender equality from education into workforce (Song & Zhao, 2022).

The government further continued to enforce policies that fostered gender equality throughout the socialist era, often capitalizing on progressive ideas introduced during the New Culture and May Fourth Movements. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) further strengthened the position of women in society by promoting the idea that women could participate equally in labor, education, and political life (Liu, 2023). Women were held center stage in creating socialist China in which the economic and political actions of women play a great deal in developing socialist China successfully according to Tan and Soong (2022). Women played a central role in building socialist China by participating in the workforce during movements like the Great Leap Forward, gaining land rights through land reforms, and contributing to political leadership. Organizations like the All-China Women's Federation and literacy campaigns further empowered women, integrating them into the nation's economic and social transformation. The term used to define any woman working very hard or leading a large quantity of activities traditionally performed by a male was "an iron woman". While these improvements were realized, several aspects of life remained unequal to today's standards, such as wages, lower representation in management positions, and an overall failure to disband gender stereotypes (Sozinova et al., 2022). However, the socialist government, through their efforts in seeking gender equality influenced by New Youth magazine's early advocacy to women's rights, marked a good starting point for the continuous development of women's situation in China.

In contemporary China, the legacy of New Youth magazine's advocacy for women's empowerment is still felt even though there has been a significant stride in the realm of gender equality. Over the decades, China has introduced various policies aimed at reducing gender inequality, including laws promoting women's participation in the workforce and education, as well as measures to combat domestic violence and gender-based discrimination (Bhandari & Hanna, 2022). China has enacted several laws to reduce gender inequality, including the Marriage Law (1950, revised 1980), which outlawed arranged marriages and granted women equal rights in marriage and divorce. The Labor Law (1995) and the Employment Promotion Law (2008) mandated equal pay and prohibited workplace gender discrimination. Additionally, the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (2016) provided legal protections for victims of abuse, marking a significant step toward addressing gender-based violence. The ideals of gender equality promoted by the New Culture Movement continue to influence contemporary debates about women's rights in China. Challenges remain, though, particularly in the realms of political representation and economic participation. Although women in China are more empowered to receive education and work compared to ever before, they remain largely underrepresented in leadership roles and are generally paid much lower wages than their male counterparts (Hu & Mu, 2021). Traditional gender roles are still maintained in society and affect women's experience at work and within the family, and the social expectations about the role of

a woman as a caregiver continue to limit the career opportunities of a woman (Chen & Tanaka, 2023). Yet the message of the empowerment of women and the advocacy through the ideals espoused in the New Youth magazine and the New Culture Movement keep the cause on track to further gender equality in modern China. As China continues to grapple with these issues, an important reminder of the real battle for women's rights and gender equality that has persisted in the country is left behind by the historical legacy of women's activism sparked by New Youth.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adapts a qualitative historical research design to investigate the impact of New Youth magazine on Chinese women's liberation and empowerment. A historical research approach was considered suitable for the study because its focus was exploring the types of sociocultural and education reforms that New Youth inspired during the New Culture Movement and later on. Analyzing the original edition of New Youth and key articles such as Tao Lügong's *Women's Issues* and Chen Duxiu's *On Women*, helps one understand the perspective of the magazine towards gender equality, education, and participation in society. Secondary sources such as academic journal articles, books, and historical archives were consulted to provide background context and support the interpretation of the primary data. Archival research was employed in gathering data. The original and translated versions of New Youth were examined for repeated themes regarding women's emancipation. Content analysis was used to code and interpret the magazine's condemnation of feudal ethics, advocacy of education, and promotion of women's rights. Cross-checking with secondary sources was also performed to ensure the reliability and validity of findings.

### **4. Key Contributions of New Youth Magazine**

#### *4.1. Critiquing Feudal Ethics*

Among the greatest contributions New Youth magazine made toward changing the role of women in modern China was in the criticism of feudal ethics that had ruled the lives of women for so long under the Confucian system. An example of such intellectual challenge to the patriarchal structure that controlled the freedom of women is Tao Lügong's article, "Women's Issues." The article clearly brought out the rigidly entrenched gender norms that put women in a background position in both families and society at large. Tao opined that the feudal system oppression of women limited their growth and also barred China from achieving modernization standards. The criticism of such practices as foot-binding and the preference for male children over female offspring was part of a more general call for the dismantling of feudal structures that restricted women's social mobility and educational opportunities (Ren, 2022). In doing so, New Youth played a critical role in awakening women's consciousness, challenging them to question the values that had kept them in a state of subjugation for centuries. Being beyond simply a theoretical attack, the journal was a battle cry for Chinese women to struggle and get their rights within a modernising China.

#### *4.2. Advocacy for Women's Education*

Another very important feature of New Youth's influence was its strong advocacy

for women's education, especially as seen in Chen Duxiu's translation of the article "On Women." In the piece, Chen discussed how education was the power of change in bettering the quality of life for women. He claimed that education was a way for women to break free from their bondage and establish themselves on an equal footing with men in the modern world. According to Chen, he said this in a bid to translate Western feminist thought into a Chinese context where women were supposed to have knowledge regarding their participation in the political, social, and economic spheres (Kumar et al., 2022). Through the translation and spreading of such thought, *New Youth* became an avenue for campaigning on educational reforms that would bring about equal opportunities in intellectual development between men and women. Such a vision played a crucial role in challenging the status quo, for it presented that the elevation of women's position in society was only possible if educational disparities were eradicated (Kong & Zhu, 2021). This inspired a whole generation of women, yet for the first time in their history, Chinese women were encouraged to seek education and professional careers. This is how this development slowly but significantly transformed Chinese society. Table 1 shows the timeline of educational reforms inspired by *New Youth*.

**Table 1: Timeline of educational reforms inspired by *New Youth*.**

Year	Event/Development	Description
1915	Publication of <i>New Youth</i>	<i>New Youth</i> magazine begins publishing under the leadership of Chen Duxiu, advocating for progressive ideas, including the importance of women's education and gender equality.
1919	May Fourth Movement	Sparked by <i>New Youth</i> 's ideas, the May Fourth Movement promotes national reform, focusing on intellectual and educational modernization, including greater access to education for women.
1920s	Establishment of New Women's Schools	The emergence of schools designed specifically for women, influenced by <i>New Youth</i> 's advocacy for women's education. These schools offered advanced curricula in literature, politics, and science.
1924	<i>On Women</i> Translated by Chen Duxiu	Chen Duxiu's translation of the article <i>On Women</i> emphasizes the need for women's education as a cornerstone for social progress and gender equality.
1927	Women's Literacy Campaigns	The Chinese government, influenced by <i>New Youth</i> 's calls for gender equality, begins government-sponsored literacy campaigns targeting women in rural areas.
1930s	Rise of Women's Colleges	Women's higher education institutions, such as Beijing Women's University, begin expanding due to the advocacy of educational reforms by <i>New Youth</i> and other intellectuals.
1949	Founding of the People's Republic of China	The new socialist government, influenced by the ideals of <i>New Youth</i> , formally prioritizes women's education and gender equality in state policy.
1950s	Gender Equality in Education Enshrined	Under the new government, gender equality becomes a legal right, and women are granted equal access to education at all levels. This policy is a direct result of earlier advocacy from <i>New Youth</i> and related movements.
1970s	Reform and Opening-Up	China's economic reforms include further access to education for women in both urban and rural areas, building on the foundations laid by <i>New Youth</i> in advocating for women's equality.
2000s	Emphasis on Higher Education for Women	The Chinese government and educational institutions continue to push for greater female representation in higher education, drawing from the early ideals of <i>New Youth</i> in promoting equal educational opportunities.

### 4.3. Promotion of Women's Education and Societal Change

The impact of the magazine on women's education was not just theoretical but also practical, since *New Youth* advocated for the founding of educational institutions and the incorporation of women into spheres of study that had traditionally been male. Throughout the early years of the 20th century, as *New Youth* advocated for societal reformation, a number of new schools for women were opened, many in response to and inspired by principles outlined in the magazine (Yan & Yang, 2021). In the larger context of national project modernization, women and men alike were recognized as essential contributors to China's development. Education among women became valued not only by the state in order to bring improvement in women's lives, but also it started to think of their inclusion

for the all-round development of the nation. Gradually, women began pursuing a wider range of fields of study which were law, medicine, politics, and even began to access participation in diverse workplaces as well as in public life due to educational reform during the beginning of the 20th century (Song & Li, 2021). This growth in educational opportunities of women was probably the most important achievement of the magazine—the direct impetus for empowerment by women within a modernized Chinese society.

#### *4.4. Promotion of Women's Rights*

Besides promoting women's education, *New Youth* was also actively involved in advocating for women's rights in different dimensions, such as political participation and equality at the workplace. The journal focused much on the need for women's participation in the public sphere and argued that real modernization was impossible without the active participation of women in the political, economic, and social spheres (Hao, Zhang, & Xiao, 2021). One of the peak moments of the *New Youth* was the publication of the article titled "Equal Discussion on Women's Rights," in which it advocated that women be equated to their male counterparts both in the world of work and in the world of politics. The magazine argued that women were as good as men in their contribution to the development of the nation and should, therefore, have equal access to political power, work opportunities, and social recognition (Zhu et al., 2022). This article, and others like it, challenged deeply held beliefs about women's inherent inferiority and sought to change the perception of women as passive subjects to active, equal participants in society. Pieces like He Zhen's writings on feminist anarchism and Hu Shi's advocacy for women's rights emphasized women's active role in shaping society. These works collectively aimed to transform the perception of women from passive subjects to active, equal participants in political, social, and economic spheres. The advocacy for workplace equality emphasized that women should be paid fairly for their work and should have the same rights as men to choose their careers, signaling a break from traditional norms that restricted women to domestic roles.

#### *4.5. Impact of Advocacy on Societal Change*

The discussions on women's rights that found room in the pages of *New Youth* began a wider public debate on gender equality that went beyond the intellectual sector to touch the mundane. This discourse shaped attitudes toward women's participation in working life and politics. Over time, as more women began to engage in paid labor, especially in urban areas, their visibility in public life grew, challenging the traditional boundaries that had separated the private and public spheres (Liu, 2023). The influence of *New Youth* extended beyond intellectual elites and activists to everyday women who were inspired by the magazine's call for gender equality. Following *New Youth's* campaigns for women's rights, women entered the work force in significant quantities, were active members in political movements, and led some of the social reform efforts in China in the years following the New Culture Movement (Lan, 2024). This had a considerable change in the nature of gender relations in China during that time.

#### *4.6. Legacy and Continued Advocacy for Women's Rights*

Moreover, *New Youth's* advocacy for women's rights played a key role in influencing governmental policies that promoted gender equality in the decades that followed. The socialist government, which came to power in 1949, built upon the ideals championed by *New Youth* by implementing policies that sought to eliminate gender-based discrimination

in education, employment, and family life. The push for women's political participation, for example, found institutional expression in the formation of women's organizations that advocated for women's rights within the political structure (Teng et al., 2021). Furthermore, the government's focus on women's participation in industrial work and leadership positions was influenced by the early feminist writings of New Youth and its emphasis on women's capabilities beyond the domestic sphere. While the struggle for full equality continued, the foundational work laid by New Youth contributed to the subsequent reforms in gender equality that have shaped modern China.

## 5. Influence on Modern and Contemporary Women

### 5.1. *Shaping Women's Consciousness*

New Youth's influence in shaping women's consciousness in modern and contemporary China is profound. Early advocacy in the magazine about gender equality, critique of the norms of olden times, was contributing in awakening women's self-awareness and the ideal development surrounding independence and autonomy. As New Youth questioned the centuries-old feudal system that relegated women to subservient roles, it paved the way for a new generation of women who began to challenge the traditional limitations placed upon them (Gullotta & Lin, 2022). This ideological shift empowered women to reject the notion that their worth was determined solely by their relationships to men, instead encouraging them to pursue intellectual and professional endeavors. In the present day of China, such change is shown through the growing numbers of female leaders in almost every sector of life, from Dong Mingzhu, the chairwoman of Gree Electric Appliances, to Tu Youyou, the Nobel laureate in medicine. To summarize, these women exemplify the new youth ideals: independence and equality of sexes. Dong Mingzhu's success in the business world and Tu Youyou's groundbreaking contributions to medicine reflect the continued impact of New Youth's advocacy for women's active participation in public and professional life (Yeh, 2022). These women, among many others, serve as living examples of the empowered woman that New Youth envisioned, showing that the magazine's influence continues to resonate in the development of modern Chinese women's identities.

### 5.2. *Advancing Female Education*

One of the most direct and lasting impacts New Youth had on modern China was its advocacy for women's education. Its encouragement of education as an empowerment tool established a base from which to push the significant policy changes in the 20th and 21st centuries, providing equality in the access to educational opportunities between the sexes. The education of women was very limited, and societal expectations often focused on men's education before the influence of New Youth. However, with the rise of New Youth in pushing for reform, educating women became an essential component in modernizing and developing the country. This shift in mentality is reflected in the policies that were in place during the Republican era and later in the socialist policies after 1949 (Luo, Guo, & Li, 2021). The government implemented several reforms during the early years of the People's Republic of China that promoted gender equality in education. Some of these reforms included policies that ensured women's access to primary, secondary, and tertiary education (Zhang et al., 2022). These reforms were directly influenced by the ideals promoted by New Youth, which had positioned education as a key to women's empowerment. By the 1970s, the government in China had declared

gender equality at school to be a constitutional right, so their enrollment rate went up a significant notch within institutions of higher education (Mok, 2021). The growth in the number of female students enrolled in Chinese universities is shown in Table 2. Still, an enduring legacy is further seen from how New Youth set the current scenario for education on women’s life in modern Chinese society.

**Table 2: Growth of Female Enrollment in Chinese Universities (1950–2020).**

Year	Female Enrollment (in millions)	Total University Enrollment (in millions)	Percentage of Female Enrollment	Key Developments
1950	0.04	0.12	33.33%	Early post-revolution period, limited access for women.
1960	0.06	0.15	40.00%	Women’s education starts gaining some state support post-1949 reforms.
1970	0.08	0.30	26.67%	Lower enrollment due to cultural revolution’s impact on education.
1980	0.90	2.00	45.00%	Post-reform period; more emphasis on education equality, increased access for women.
1990	2.00	5.50	36.36%	Expansion of university system and increased government focus on gender equality.
2000	4.00	10.00	40.00%	Growth in female enrollment, improved access to higher education.
2010	9.50	26.00	36.54%	Strong growth in female enrollment in universities, especially in urban areas.
2020	18.00	41.00	43.90%	Significant increase in female enrollment, women now comprise a substantial proportion of the student body in universities.

### 5.3. Increased Enrollment of Women in Higher Education

This influence is best observed in modern China, specifically through the impressive expansion of enrollment by women in the higher education establishments across the region. The early 20th-century advocacy for women’s education sparked an expansion that became firmly institutionalized after 1949. Policies that had allowed women educational equality in the 1950s and 1960s set the path open for women entering universities, studying, and joining careers which they could never access before. By the 1980s and 1990s, women across China steadily joined higher education programs due to the heightened awareness of their contribution towards China’s economic as well as intellectual progress. It gained further momentum, especially in cities. Women started to enroll in fields that were traditionally dominated by men, such as engineering and law, and more women began to appear in academic and professional circles (Li & Eryong, 2021). This increase in female participation in higher education was a turning point in China’s approach to gender equality, as New Youth aimed to ensure that women had the same intellectual and professional opportunities as their male counterparts. Today, female students dominate a large part of the Chinese student population, while the increase in graduates and doctorate holders adds emphasis to the far-reaching influence that New Youth’s calls for education leave behind.

### 5.4. Encouraging Career and Social Participation

In addition to promoting women’s education, New Youth was instrumental in promoting women’s participation in the workforce and broader social life. The magazine’s advocacy for gender equality in the workplace and in public life challenged long-standing social norms that confined women to the domestic sphere. Thus, the woman ventured into various career fields, including those traditionally dominated by men that is, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics abbreviated as STEM, and politics (Liu et al., 2021). Socialist policies beyond the 1950s supported the vision of active women’s roles in society by advocating women’s rights to work and participate in political decision-

making. Song Qingling, for example, held powerful political positions, while Jiang Ying is a scientist whose name has been heard throughout the world. There doesn't appear to be a globally recognized scientist named Jiang Ying at present. If you are referring to a researcher in a specific field, there may be limited information available. Could you clarify the area of their work or any notable contributions they have made? This would help in providing more accurate details. In recent years, women have been very much in the limelight, at least in public and professional spheres (Chen & Filieri, 2024). Entry into the hitherto male bastions of STEM fields by women in modern China assumes greater significance because it recognizes the increasing contribution of women in scientific research and technological innovation (Luo et al., 2021). Another example of the New Youth influence is that women's participation in politics has also grown. Women have increasingly filled crucial positions in the government of China and held important positions within political and social organizations. It is a benefit to women and, more importantly, a foundation of China as a modern, vibrant nation in itself, as women's rights and social participation advocated by New Youth remain relevant even today.

### *5.5. Women's Entry into Diverse Career Fields*

The effect of New Youth on women's careers pertains to the increasing women's entry in the workplace from all fields with career orientations. As such, women were mainly seen working within the household and the family without much access to professional work with this mainly coming in the early 20th century. However, when New Youth placed the independence of women and gender equality at the forefront of all aspects of life, women in China entered into various sectors of professional employment (Khondker & Pettinotti, 2024). Women can now be seen today holding influential positions in the public and private sectors, from positions of leadership in technological industries, financial institutions, medicine, and the law. For instance, Dong Mingzhu is one good example that signifies the gigantic progress women have gained in the business world. Head of Gree Electric, which happens to be one of the biggest appliance companies in China, Dong is a model that women desire for leadership roles in business (Hao et al., 2021). Women's foray into the world of STEMs has also gained significant prominence during the recent times. More women are now seeking to become engineers, medical researchers, and scientists, which has assisted in the enrichment of the innovative side of the country and its overall technological development (Ma, 2022). This is not only contributing positively to the increase in gender equality in the workplace but also generally catalyzes Chinese society.

### *5.6. Encouraging Political Engagement and Representation*

Moreover, New Youth contributed to the increasing political engagement of women in contemporary China by promoting the cause of equality of sexes in public life. The argument for women's political rights propounded by this magazine paved way for the later integration of women in key political roles. The political representation of women in China has gradually increased throughout the 20th century, and during the 21st century, women were able to serve in high-ranking government offices and as national legislators. Women's participation in politics has been key in shaping policies on women's rights, education, and employment, so that their concerns are represented in decision-making. Other notable examples include Wu Yi, the former Vice Premier of China, and Sun Chunlan, who reflect the role New Youth played in pushing women into leadership roles

in politics (Li, Qu, & Yang, 2024). To this day, the Chinese government is focused on promoting the participation of women in politics as they are represented more and more within the Communist Party and other political institutions. This increase in women's political activity testifies to the persistent power of New Youth in the continued promotion of women's rights and social involvement, proving that the ideals of the New Culture Movement are a living force in the politics of modern China.

## **6. Societal and Legal Impact**

### *6.1. Increased Social Awareness*

To an important degree, the heightened social consciousness of rights for women and gender equality within modern China must be attributed to the historical legacy of movements like the New Culture Movement and works such as New Youth. As the movement for women's liberation and empowerment gained popularity, New Youth gradually transformed its advocacy into an inclusive societal consciousness encouraging people to accept gender equality as an essential dimension in education, the workplace, and politics. As New Youth criticized feudal norms and promoted the education and social involvement of women, it encouraged the establishment of women's organizations and advocacy groups working to enhance women's rights and status in society (Rao et al., 2022). In the decades following the founding of the People's Republic of China, Women's organizations proliferated, serving as a significant platform for public debate on gender equality. These organizations, therefore, were not only holding campaigns and creating informative material but were also connecting the policies of the government with women in dire need of aid. Media, whether it is old school or digital, has been instrumental in taking forward these causes. The women's rights cause in China have, for decades now, had special focus areas on issues related to gender violence, reproductive health, and harassment at work, as identified by Alhassan and Nwagbara (2023). This media attention has played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion and encouraging broader societal involvement in advocating for women's rights, amplifying the social awareness that began with New Youth and continues to shape modern conversations about gender equality in China.

The role of media in amplifying women's rights issues has been crucial in advancing gender equality in China, continuing the legacy of New Youth as a key force in shaping public discourse. Over time, Chinese media has become a platform through which women's voices can be heard, and their struggles and achievements are brought into the spotlight. Rising feminist media, social media sites, and discussions over gender-related topics are easier ways in which people and organizations challenge gender-inequality-enforcing norms. Television, print media, and digital media platforms like Weibo enable women's rights groups and activists to speak out on gender inequality at any time and in any location, making them open spaces for dialogue and advocacy previously not available (Yorulmaz, 2021). This shift in the media has facilitated an increased emphasis on issues like workplace discrimination, gender-based violence, and reproductive rights, which are all integral components of the women's rights movement. These increased visibility factors have significantly affected public awareness and compelled policy reforms in terms of changing policies to improve women's lives. Table 3 lists the famous women's organizations in China and their contributions. Just

as *New Youth* used its pages to address the cultural and social challenges women faced, contemporary media continues to act as a critical mode for advancing women's rights in China, perpetuating the broader goals of women's emancipation and equality that began in the early 20th century (Teng et al., 2021).

**Table 3: Prominent Women's Organizations in China and their Contributions.**

Organization	Established	Key Contributions	Impact on Women's Rights
All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)	1949	Advocacy for women's rights, protection of women's legal rights, promotion of women in leadership, education and healthcare.	Played a central role in shaping policies related to women's rights, gender equality, and women's welfare.
China Women's News	1949	Publication of articles and reports on women's issues, advocating for gender equality, women's health, and social welfare.	Raised public awareness on critical gender issues, providing a platform for discussing women's challenges.
Women's Federation of China	1984	Provides support for women's economic development, educational programs, and campaigns against domestic violence.	Focuses on empowering women economically and socially, especially in rural areas.
Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling and Service Center	1995	Legal advocacy and support for women's rights, especially in domestic violence and labor disputes.	Promotes legal awareness and fights for women's rights in cases of domestic violence and employment discrimination.
China Women's Development Foundation (CWDF)	1995	Works on economic empowerment programs, particularly targeting rural women and providing microfinance opportunities.	Focuses on rural women's empowerment, helping them gain access to financial resources and entrepreneurship.
Feminist Voices	2007	A digital platform focusing on feminist discourse, advocating for women's rights and gender equality through online media.	Provides a space for young feminists to discuss and raise awareness of contemporary gender issues in China.
The Women's Health and Development Center of China (WHDC)	2003	Focuses on improving women's health, particularly maternal and reproductive health, and public health education.	Advocates for women's health rights, contributing to policy changes around reproductive health and access to care.
Shanghai Women's Association	1919	Focuses on women's cultural and educational development, as well as career advancement opportunities for women.	Works toward increasing women's participation in cultural and educational sectors, encouraging self-development.

## 6.2. Legal Reforms

The legal reforms in China have reflected the social changes initiated by movements such as the New Culture Movement and publications like *New Youth*. The Chinese government made key steps forward after the revolution to establish legal protection for women's rights when it established the People's Republic of China in 1949. The early laws were on aspects of equality, especially in cases of marriage and family law, between men and women. Key legal steps brought about equality for both genders are evidenced in the major steps in a law like that of the Marriage Law of 1950, which ban arranged marriages and child marriages or polygamy, and has therefore granted right to women regarding choosing freely between whom to tie the knot to. This later decades saw additional legal reforms with the aim of protecting women against discrimination in employment, policies created to ensure that equal pay would be received for equal work and the elimination of gender-based job segregation (Bhandari & Hanna, 2022). The legal protections put in place led to women participating in the labor force and continuing their education; these factors all contributed to greater visibility in society. Legal reforms in modern China keep changing while recent legislation addresses domestic violence, sexual harassment, and reproductive rights. The milestone was the Anti-Domestic Violence Law of 2015 to protect women from any kind of violence connected with and inside the family. Labour Law and Gender Equality Law have been further strengthened and enhanced over time for the protection of women's rights at all employment levels. These laws stand in stark contrast to the feudal practices that *New Youth* opposed and signal a major shift in China's approach to gender equality

and women's rights. Recently, China has reached significant milestones, with gender equality now a central anti-discrimination principle, advancements in equal pay across various sectors, and legal protections in place to safeguard women's rights, which cannot be violated, even by law.

Law of the protection of Women's rights and interest from the year 1992-2005 also provides great deals with equality related matters under their jurisprudence. This law requires the treatment of women at work places to be just and fair; it does not allow gender discrimination or exploitation against women. For Chinese women, the issue of equal pay for equal work was a long-running concern, but the legal frameworks have evolved based on New Youth's advocacy to achieve women's economic independence. In the last few years, there have been many reported cases of gender wage discrimination, leading to legal amendments that mandate open wage structures in businesses and forbid discrimination based on gender (Hu & Mu, 2021). One of these cases was Beijing Yunnan Tianyi Company vs. Liu Xiaoqing. The *Beijing Yunnan Tianyi Company vs. Liu Xiaoqing* case involved a dispute over a breach of contract, where the company accused Liu Xiaoqing of failing to promote their products as agreed. Liu, a famous actress, contested the claims, arguing the contract was invalid. The court ultimately sided with Liu, highlighting the importance of protecting personal rights and image in commercial agreements. The court ruled in favor of the female employee for equal pay for equal work. This case is pivotal in the historical landscape of law in China: it points towards the need to enforce equal pay laws and then becomes a precedent to follow for such cases. Further progress in their enforcement reflects what New Youth sought as principles in advocating for a more challenging approach that could help knock out entrenched gender roles and open spaces for women's participation in all realms of society. While challenges remain, these legal advances demonstrate the deep influence of New Youth on China's legal framework regarding women's rights and gender equality.

## 7. Challenges and Future Directions

### 7.1. Persistent Challenges

While gender equality has come a long way in China, many issues persist to undermine women's full empowerment. Most significantly, workplace-related challenges plague the system: pervasive discrimination at the workplace against women is coupled with the enormous wage gaps and occupational segregation between male and female employees. Such problems often impede access of women into positions of authority and power. Other studies have revealed that women in China receive, on average, 22% lower compensation than their male equivalents in other jobs, a gap even wider in rural regions and especially traditional industries (Xiong, Yang, & Shen, 2022). Occupational segregation is another critical issue, with women often confined to low-paying, less prestigious sectors, whereas men dominate STEM fields, finance, and politics. The "glass ceiling" phenomenon interferes with female entry into the top tier of managerial and executive positions because women are underrepresented in leadership positions within government and the private enterprise. In addition, the expectation in culture that women prioritize their responsibilities to families for childcare and eldercare over professional growth amplifies gender imbalance in the workplace (Yin & Sun, 2020). Gender-based violence and harassment also remain rampant, despite reforms in the

law to curb these practices. Such persistence indicates the complexities of attaining gender equality in China, while the progress that has been achieved remains impressive.

Another challenge deeply seated in centuries of Confucian and feudal tradition has been deeply seated in patriarchal values in social attitudes and culture. This culture has cultivated and promoted gender roles that, to date, still manage to restrict the choices and freedoms women can have and pursue. Many women living in rural settings, for instance, are not exposed to quality education and still become married very young, then largely remain in their economic dependence on male relatives. In addition, the resurgence of traditionalist rhetoric in recent years, which portrays women as wives and mothers, has undermined efforts toward gender equality. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and workplace harassment, continues to be rampant despite legal protections such as the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (Hu & Mu, 2021). However, the laws are not consistently enforced, and stigma often deters victims from seeking justice. The lack of comprehensive support systems for survivors further perpetuates the cycle of inequality and disempowerment.

In the education sector, while tremendous progress has been made in increasing female enrollment in universities, gender disparities persist in fields of study and career outcomes. Women are still underrepresented in STEM disciplines and high-demand technical fields, where biases discourage their participation. Many female students encounter implicit and explicit messages that “encourage” them to take up “acceptable” fields of study, which include education, health care, and the arts and not engineering and technology (Xiong, Yang, & Shen, 2022). In addition, educational gaps between rural and urban areas amplify inequality, for girls in the rural areas hardly have access to quality education or vocational training to pursue higher education. This therefore limits the economic mobility of women in rural settings and perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality.

## 7.2. Recommendations

A multifaceted approach is required to address these challenges, strengthening both educational and legal frameworks. Ensuring equal access to education for all genders, particularly in fields where women are underrepresented, is one of the most effective ways to combat gender disparities. Initiatives that encourage young girls to pursue careers in STEM, technology, and leadership roles are important for closing the gender gap in these sectors (Yang, 2020). The legal frameworks also need to be strengthened and more strictly enforced to ensure equal pay, workplace protections, and anti-discrimination measures for women. While China has enacted a lot of gender equality laws, including the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and the Gender Equality Law, the need for better enforcement and awareness at local levels still exists. In Brazil, despite strong laws against domestic violence, there are challenges in ensuring victims’ access to justice, particularly in rural areas. These examples highlight the importance of improving local awareness and enforcement of gender equality laws (Macqueen et al., 2020). Public awareness campaigns and advocacy programs should also be expanded to challenge the deep-seated societal attitudes that perpetuate gender stereotypes and limit women’s participation in public life. Media, especially social media, can become a powerful tool in the communication of these messages and raising awareness about the continued challenges women face in achieving equality. International cooperation is also important for the advancement of gender equality, beyond national efforts. China would learn best from other countries, especially with respect to their involvement in

global activities like the United Nations' SDGs, from which they have learned about what has been tried and achieved for gender equality (Kumar & Suppiah, 2023). International human rights organizations may collaborate with them, which could then amplify the voices of advocates towards the long-existing problems faced by women in China. China has done particularly well in maternal health and education, but so much more still needs to be done on the lines of promoting women's political representation and addressing workplace-based discrimination. International dialogue can provide valuable insights into how other countries have overcome similar obstacles and accordingly foster a more comprehensive approach to gender equality. Strengthening global partnerships will not only help China further its gender equality goals but also contribute to the broader global movement for women's rights.

## 8. Conclusion

New Youth magazine was one of the most influential publications in China during the early 20th century in the shaping of discourse around women's liberation. Progressive and radical in its critique of feudal ethics, New Youth became a central pillar of the New Culture Movement, calling for the demolition of traditional gender roles that limited women's rights and opportunities. The magazine had effects on education where it advocated the need for women's education and equality; it provided an avenue for the voices that call for women's autonomy and empowerment. It also went on to affect social awareness through the stimulation of a new consciousness among women with regard to their rights and encouraging active participation in the public and political spheres. The New Youth contributed to the establishment of the early feminist movement, which later helped lay the groundwork for the subsequent gains in women's rights both during the socialist era and in contemporary China. Consequently, the advocacy of the magazine for gender equality has become a key milestone in China's long history of gender reform and reflects the struggle for social and political empowerment of women in the country. The lessons learned from New Youth continue to resonate in contemporary debates about gender equality in China. The magazine's call for an overhaul of traditional cultural norms and its advocacy for women's education, independence, and political involvement remain highly relevant today, as gender disparities still persist in education, employment, and politics. The New Youth's influence on gender equality advocacy offers valuable insights into how media can be used to shift public attitudes and challenge entrenched gender norms. In the modern context, these lessons can be applied to further strengthen policies that promote women's rights, support women in leadership roles, and address the social, cultural, and institutional barriers that women continue to face. By urging the rise of a new generation contemporary China is provided with the possibility of establishing a more harmonious society in which gender equality is not only a legal but deeply instilled social value whereby future generations of women can also similarly Compete on an equal basis across all areas of society.

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