



## Comment on “Developing Women's Studies at Universities in China: Research, Curriculum and Institution’ by Du Fangqin

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Prof. Du Fangqin’s paper gives a comprehensive historical review of women’s studies in China. As Prof. Du’s collaborator in the project discussed by her, I have read all the articles on women’s studies written by her. So I am able to pinpoint the unique and important contribution in this new paper. That is “The Present Scenario: Diverse Strategies in Naming and Operating.” This is the first time she presents an analysis of the complicated, or, even messy situation of women’s studies in China.

“Women’s studies” and “gender studies” are both translated terms. Translation is a site of contestation, as illustrated in Du Fangqin’s paper. Different renditions of these two English terms are often signs of different discourses and signify different positions and strategies of political maneuvers. Located in the middle of these contestations, Du Fangqin is certainly highly conscious of the nuances and political meanings of these subtle differences in Chinese renditions. Unfortunately, some nuances are untranslatable, therefore, are lost in translation. For instance, strictly speaking, Li Xiaojiang’s usage of *xingbie yanjiu* is not equivalent to gender studies. Her choice of “*xingbie*” instead of “*shehui xingbie*” is a conscious decision to mark her difference from gender studies. In fact, she rejects a feminist gender analysis on the ground that it is western. “*Xingbie*” used here is in the way as it appears in all the official forms, that is “sex.” However, it will generate misunderstanding, too, if we render her

“*xingbie yanjiu*” as “sex studies.” She does not do studies on sexuality, either.

Du Fangqin made great effort to present these different terminologies not because such terms as “*xingbie yanjiu*” in Li Xiaojiang’s usage represent any theoretical breakthrough or offer some analytical power, but rather, these terms reflect the complexity of the terrain in China. If I read her correctly, Du’s paper warns feminist scholars abroad to pay great attention to contents rather than labels of products made in China. Actually, the situation is not unique to China. International donors put in large amounts of money in developing countries, funding projects with the label of women and gender. To many smart people, men or women, it is very important to claim that label. I can give you many more such examples. But let me save some time for intellectual issues.

Du Fangqin presents three groups of scholars in the field of “women’s studies.” They are: female studies (humanist position), *xingbie yanjiu* (the sexed being position), and women and gender studies (gender perspective). I would like to hear Prof. Du further analyze the limit of the third group, or their strengths and weaknesses, not simply external constraints, which are explained clearly in her paper. To what extent does their positionality and knowledge make up limit their intellectual endeavor? What do they see as cultural and intellectual parameters that constrain their explorations? Finally, in the Chinese statist project of modernity, part of the process of global capitalism, where do the third group locate themselves?